THE MAGAZINE OF IDEAS FOR OPEN-MINDED READERS

The Critic

Summer Double Issue

Aug-Sept 2022
Issue 30 | £7.10
thecritic.co.uk

End of the party

Alistair Haimes Reasons to be fearful
Charles Wide How the Church blew it on race
Lisa Hilton A very superior Season

ISSN 2633-2655

THE CRITIC SUMMER SALE

SUBSCRIBE TO THE CRITIC PRINT & DIGITAL EDITIONS PLUS A COMPLIMENTARY TOTE BAG

Save a huge 86% off the cover price! For just £5 you will receive an annual subscription to *The Critic* print and digital editions and we will send you a complimentary tote bag too!

Subscribe today for just £5 and you will get:

- 5 issues of *The Critic* magazine
- Full access to digital editions
- A complimentary tote bag
- An 86% saving on the shop price
- Free delivery to your door

Never miss an issue! Simply subscribe today to *The Critic* for a good read in the comfort of your home.

Visit thecritic.imbmsubscriptions.com/AUG22 or call 01293 312250 quoting AUG22

T&C'S: CLOSING DATE FOR ORDERS IS 30TH SEPTEMBER 2022. THE PRICE SHOWN IS A UK DIRECT DEBIT OFFER. YOUR SUBSCRIPTION WILL BEGIN WITH THE NEXT AVAILABLE ISSUE. ALL SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE FOR A 6 MONTH PERIOD. IF YOU DO NOT CANCEL AT THE END OF THAT PERIOD, THE SUBSCRIPTION WILL AUTO RENEW BY DIRECT DEBIT AT £15. ALL SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NON-REFUNDABLE. THIS IS A LIMITED OFFER AND MAY BE WITHDRAWN AT ANY TIME. PLEASE NOTE: BY SUBSCRIBING WE WILL CONTACT YOU ABOUT YOUR SUBSCRIPTION FROM TIME TO TIME. THE CRITIC IS PUBLISHED 10 TIMES A YEAR, WITH 2 DOUBLE ISSUES IN THE YEAR.

Incompetents abroad

IN RESPONSE TO THE YALE HISTORIAN Timothy Snyder declaring, "This war ends when Ukraine wins", *Critic* contributor Sumantra Maitra asked, "what does 'win' mean in this context?"

Henry Kissinger, as elliptical as ever at 99, was still clear enough that the best "win" Ukraine is getting out of Russia's invasion is not losing any more. "At no point", the former US Secretary of State explained, "did I say that Ukraine should give up any territory. I said the logical dividing line for a ceasefire is the status quo ante."

Whatever worldly imprecision Kissinger meant for his successors to contemplate in terms of front lines on maps, his advice was directly for them, and only indirectly for Ukraine's leaders.

The time when Britain was in America's place today will soon be beyond living memory: the arbiter of the affairs of other nations while precariously seeking to maintain her own hegemonic position. In other words, those who conduct, and those who merely think about our foreign affairs, have had a long time to adjust their habits of thought to the task actually in front of them.

The Critic

Our hopeless foreign policy elite has no idea what winning in Ukraine looks like — or how to bring it about

WHAT EVIDENCE IS THERE THAT we have a foreign policy elite in this country even adequately up to the job of charting a middle power's place in the world? Lots, and all of it bad.

We should reflect on why such unremitting elite failure goes on happening decade after decade without salutary consequences for the people who keep screwing up.

Name a British national strategy: EU membership was a 50-year failure; the bubble of Blairite and Tory Moderniser Sinophilia is long since burst; and always unexamined is the great question of what exactly we are getting out of Atlanticism that we wouldn't anyway get if we behaved just as France does?

If the big picture is dismal, zoom into the micro: take Ukraine. What are the lethal resources we are sending there? Why are we doing it? What do we hope to get out of doing that? Before February this year, the idea that British interests had a frontier on the Dnieper would have been seen as a fantastical example of strategic overreach. Yet it is there that our arsenal's range now extends.

This is not to make a point about the war being lost by Ukraine — lost at least in the sense that the conflict will eventually end with it dispossessed of large parts of its land. That was evident the day Russia invaded. Nor is it to consider the moral case: the rationale behind the invasion and atrocities committed by Russian forces are abominable. It is to simply ask: having done what most of the world did not by choosing to intervene, what do we hope to get out of our intervention?

Have we decided to help bleed out Russia in Ukraine, the fate of Anglo-American folly in Iraq and Afghanistan? It is a bold strategy. But assuming Russia is still in miserable, bloody possession of territory come the winter, what then? What should we, or do we, ask Ukraine to do with our support? Fantasy piles upon pipedream.

LOOK AT UKRAINE ANOTHER WAY, the way we should have looked at our intervention in Libya (which was as disastrous for her people as an endless war fought in Ukraine would surely be there). This was dressed up as morality, but it should have been seen as revenge. The long memory and longer arm of the British state paying back Gaddafi for arming the IRA.

So too could Boris Johnson's impulsive intervention in Ukraine have been regarded as due punishment for Russia for her insults offered on British territory, by her crude murders on British soil. Thinking like this conceives of limited goals and limited outcomes: it does not dream about remaking the world.

But we could have a strategy, too, in Ukraine. Except it would be directed against our grossest foreign policy failure: the division of our own territory by the EU's Northern Ireland Protocol. We could see our optional war in Ukraine as bringing absolutely inescapable costs for one of the Protocol's great European patrons, Germany. We could — in fact, why don't we? — point to their sanction-busting determination to keep Kaliningrad in business as proof of how flexible and realistic the EU can be when it wants.

Yet we are not supplying the Ukrainian war effort to teach Germany a lesson, nor even to stay in step with the United States, although President Biden's unabated and unabashed favouritism for the neutral Irish Republic over NATO's most important pro-American European member tells much about how little influence British diplomacy has with a Democrat administration in Washington DC.

Russia and Ukraine both know what winning would represent. Our hopeless foreign policy elite has no clue what winning would even look like, or how to bring pressure to secure a tenable end to the conflict. There is no coherent strategy driving our foreign policy, whether in Europe or beyond. ●

Contents

COLUMNS

Letters 8

Jonathan Meades
Rugger's buggered 6

Law
Joshua Rozenberg: The PM showed disregard for the law again and again 9

Woman about Town
Sarah Ditum: In arcadia ego 10

Dilyn the Dog
Lavender letters 11

David Starkey
A pair of presidential PMs 16

My Woke World
Titania McGrath: *Real* privilege 21

Sounding Board
Marcus Walker: Wining, dining and reconciling 24

Economics
Tim Congdon: Beware the Tory tax-cutters 31

Everyday Lies
Theodore Dalrymple: Heaven & hell 37

Arty Types
D.J. Taylor on **Charley Coutts** 50

Serious Business
Johnny Leavesley: Dealing with sticky fingers 51

Romeo Coates
Cast asunder 84

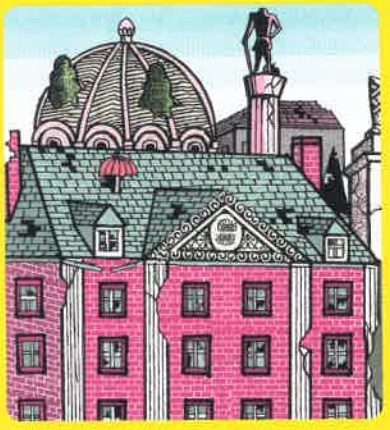
Miriam Elia on ...
St Primark 7

Adam Dant on ...
Ghosts of Hong Kong 56

FEATURES

A cynical man without any plan
Christopher Montgomery says Boris Johnson was an opportunist Prime Minister whose gambler's luck ran out 12

The silence that shows who Joe Biden's real allies are
Henry McDonald says Ireland's failure to help Ukraine presents an opportunity for unionists opposed to the Protocol 14



This month's cover is illustrated by John Broadley

How the Church blew it on race
Charles Wide warns that a secretive Church of England commission is intent on seeing bigotry everywhere 18

Failing to get answers from above
Graham Stewart argues the Church is more concerned with management than theology and falling congregations 22

Farewell to St Benet's Hall
Joseph Shaw regrets the capitulation of a Catholic institution to the modern gods of diversity and breast-binding 25

Our revels now are ended
Alistair Haimes warns of tough times ahead for the economy 28

Blood and soil
Richard Negus reflects on the historic links between fascism and the Greens 32

Like Wotan riding the storm
Richard Bratby fulfils a boyhood dream on the footplate of a steam train 35

High times with high minds
Lincoln Allison recalls Alpine reading trips with the *Chaletites*, Oxford's exclusive secret club 38

Parenting, Paxos-style
Claudia Savage-Gore gets triggered on a villa holiday in Greece with the touchy-feely in-laws 40

A very superior Season
Lisa Hilton says the modern Season may have changed, but true cognoscenti still treasure exclusivity 42

Alexander's lost "Greek" tribe
Paul Rafaelle visits Pakistan's remote Kalash people, who claim descent from Alexander the Great's army 45

Let there be light
Martin Kemp says Raphael's masterful depiction of divine light owes much to the poetry of Dante 52

STUDIO
James Panero: The English Baroque architecture of New York 58

BOOKS

George Owers: *Defenders of the Faith: The British Monarchy, Religion and the Next Coronation* by Catherine Pepinster 62

Henry Hopwood-Phillips: *Obedience is Freedom* by Jacob Phillips 63

Andrew Roberts: *Leadership: Six studies in World Strategy* by Henry Kissinger 65

Barney Hoskyns: *Pin-Ups 1972: Third Generation Rock'n' Roll* by Peter Stanfield 68

Julian Stannard: *Letters of Basil Bunting* edited by Alex Niven 70

Paul Dean: *Look! We Have Come Through! Living with D.H. Lawrence* by Lara Feigel 71

Zachary Hardman: *Who by Fire: Leonard Cohen in the Sinai* by Matti Friedman 73

Michael Ledger-Lomas: *Rule, Nostalgia: A Backwards History of Britain* by Hannah Rose Woods 74

Miranda Malins: *Henrietta Maria: Conspirator, Warrior, Phoenix Queen* by Leanda de Lisle 76

Edmund Stewart: *The Age of the Strongman* by Gideon Rachman 77

Ben Felsenburg: *Old Truths and New Clichés: Essays by Isaac Bashevis Singer* edited by David Stromberg 79

Patrick Galbraith: *Illuminated by Water* by Malachy Tallack 80

John Self: Old novels for new places 81

THE SECRET AUTHOR
The writer's lot: a cautionary tale 83

August/September 2022 | Issue 30

CARTOON BY ROYSTON ROBERTSON; CRITIC FOX BY JASON FORD/HEART

THE CRITICS

MUSIC Norman Lebrecht
The last Proms as we know it 86

OPERA Robert Thicknesse
Music to die for 87

POP Sarah Ditum
Britney's impossible dream 88

ART Michael Prodger
The case of the disappearing duchess 89

THEATRE Anne McElvoy
Chekov à la Game of Thrones 90

CINEMA Christopher Silvester
The first million-dollar movie 91

TELEVISION Adam LeBor
Mining the past 92

RADIO Michael Henderson
An American's excellent essays 93

ARCHITECTURE Charles Saumarez Smith
Two sides of the Olympic development 94

TABLE TALK

Eating Out
Lisa Hilton endures a taste of the Blitz in a restaurant *sans* ingredients and staff 97

Eating In
Felipe Fernández-Armesto suggests some summery cold soups 98

Country Notes
Patrick Galbraith meets the new Italian boss of London's leading gunmaker 100

Drink
Christopher Pincher avoids that morning-after feeling 100

Root and Branch
Hephzibah Anderson waters her allotment during the heatwave 102

Turf Account
Stephen Pollard makes a list of his personal racing favourites 103

Style
Hannah Betts loves Hayley Menzies 104

Hot House
Claudia Savage-Gore sympathises with a sky-high schoolyard mum 105

SACRED COWS
Harold Pinter: from bad to verse by Alexander Larman 106

THIS SPORTING LIFE
Nick Timothy: Cricket's new mindset 108
Boris Starling: Hail, Lady Mary! 109
Patrick Kidd: Sporting PMs 110

The Critic

thecritic.co.uk
11 Tufton Street, Westminster, SW1P 3QB
editorial@thecritic.co.uk

The Critic is published by Locomotive 6960 Ltd

© LOCOMOTIVE 6960 LIMITED 2020

Editorial
Editor: Christopher Montgomery
Deputy Editor: Graham Stewart
Art Director: Martin Colyer
Designer: David Rice
Production Editor: Nick Pryer
Literary Editor: Paul Lay
Online Editor: Sebastian Milbank
Digital production: Kittie Helmick
Contributing Editors: Daniel Johnson, Roger Kimball, Toby Young, Alexander Larman, Ben Sixsmith
Artists in Residence: Adam Dant, Miriam Elia

Publisher: Olivia Hartley

Subscriptions
Annual Subscription rates:
UK: £46, Europe: £52, Rest of World: £55
Subscription and delivery queries:
The Critic Subscriptions,
Intermedia Brand Marketing Ltd,
Unit 6, The Enterprise Centre, Kelvin Lane,
Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 9PE
Telephone: 01293 312250
Email: thecritic@subscriptionhelpline.co.uk
Web: thecritic.imbmsubscriptions.com

Publishing
Circulation & Marketing Consultant:
Yvonne Dwerryhouse
marketing@thecritic.co.uk
Printing: Acorn Web Offset Limited,
Normanton Industrial Estate, Loscoe Close,
Normanton WF6 1TW
Distribution: Intermedia Brand Marketing Ltd, Unit 6, The Enterprise Centre, Kelvin Lane, Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 9PE

The Critic is registered as a trade mark (No UK00003433651), owned by Locomotive 6960 Ltd.

JONATHAN MEADES

Rugger's buggered

The more money has come into rugby, the more dismal the spectacle has become

DOWN THE YEARS Twickenham's attraction has altered. The last time I went (and the time before and the time before that) the best of the day was the car park picnic. Picnics in drizzly car parks ought to be miserable. However, should the dishes have been prepared by a master such as Pierre Koffmann and the wines imported by Yapp Brothers, then the occasion becomes an ad hoc regale.

And then off we trudge, not particularly willingly, with the Barbour'd hordes to watch a game of set-plays, man mountains, butch choreography, gain lines, "hits" and rules which no one, especially these days the referees, seems to understand.

As a spectacle, rugby union has vastly diminished. Where does a ruck end? When is a maul a brawl? The debt to American football is massive and debilitating. The late Alan Watkins, a writer not given to hyperbole, observed that rugby union is "no longer a game for normal members of the human race". It had become an attritional mud bath for men who had "bulked up ... not always a pretty sight". They turned with the speed of a liner. That was almost 20 years ago.

TODAY IS WORSE. It is reminiscent of the sort of away-day-bonding-in-the-trenches exercises the BBC subjects its executives and their minions to. The weary plodding is, *pace* my kinsman Stuart Hogg and Antoine Dupont, seldom worth watching. When either of them gets the ball, one is transported back to a different and better age of audacity, flair, risk and the palpable enjoyment of both participants and spectators: essentially 75 minutes of thuggery and five minutes of ballet.

If the finest of all rugby players — the marvellous Phil Bennett who sadly died last month — was playing, then the five minutes of ballet would be stretched to 15 minutes and transformed into a performance that appeared to defy gravity and the norms of mobility and balance.

He deceived the eye as surely as the magician Channing Pollock did. We look this way. He goes that way. The more the pedal dexterity perplexes the more it delights.

The only sportsmen I have seen who made comparable magic are Johann Cruyff and Zinedine Zidane — "a boy with hands where his feet should be". Their gifts were financially rewarded. Not to the extent that today's football players are, but their scran was more than a crust.

Phil Bennett played in an era of shamateurism, lowly sinecures and "boot money" — bank notes handed over in envelopes, in sums that seemed a fortune to miners and steel workers whose Saturdays were devoted to parish pride, home town loyalty and playing for the sake of playing, for joy, bung or no bung.

THE MORE MONEY THAT HAS come in to football the better spectacle the game has become. Pitches are no longer ploughed. Players have, mostly, not had individuality bullied out of them by sergeant majors whose limited command of English marks them as English. Tactics are generally fluid.

José Mourinho is an exception. His teams have often played a variation of catenaccio, the ultra-disciplined, ultra-defensive Italian style of the 1960s and 70s that works fine if you have a libero with the anticipatory acumen of Gaetano Scirea but doesn't if you haven't. Even Mourinho has now and again experimented with crowd-pleasing formations.

THE MORE MONEY that has come into rugby, the more dismal the spectacle of the game has become. Every coach in the world has been treated to a cracking bumper package of data, performance analytics, algorithms, accelerometers, work efficiency indices, body weight targets: all of them tools of surveillance and consequent regimentation.

> The game is being destroyed, just as prose is being destroyed by the pseudo-discipline of Creative Writing

Players become the brawny puppets of coaches and the coaches' suited, wired up, Stasi-trained boffins from the sports psychology soviet who don't watch the game played on the pitch in front of them, but instead monitor it on multiple screens.

THE GAME IS BEING DESTROYED just as prose is being destroyed by the laughably named pseudo-discipline of Creative Writing. Those who can, write. Those who can't become Creative Writing Mentors. The excitable, jolly, all-in-this-together communal lexicon of these borderline therapists should be a warning.

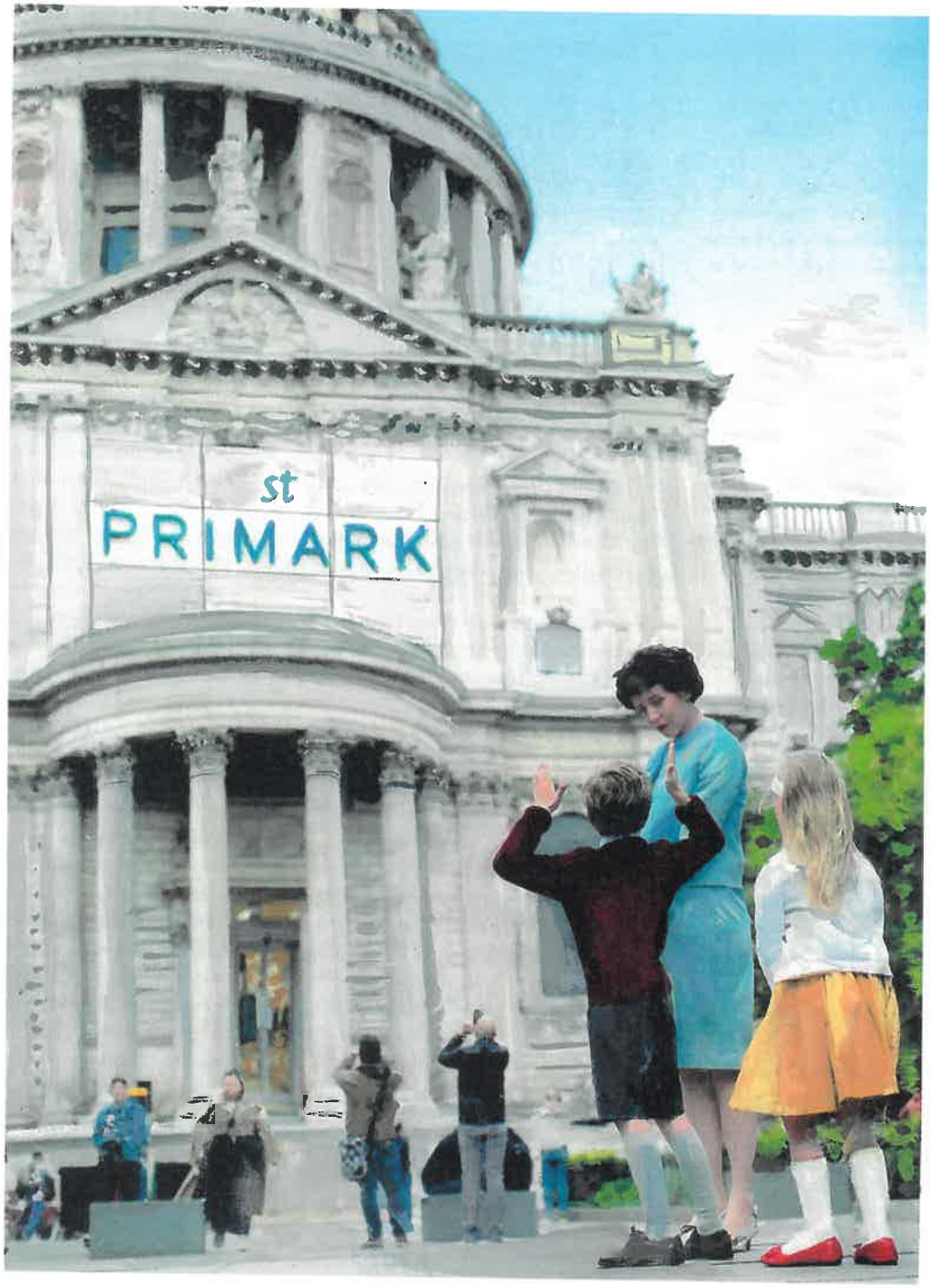
They do not heed Thom Gunn's maxim that "deep feeling doesn't make for good poetry. A way with language would be a bit of a help." They blithely spray us with wretched constructions: "workshopping", "unforgettable story worlds", "keep readers turning those pages", "be an active member of the writing community", "broaden your creative skillset", "harness the power of language". (There is a lot of harnessing going on).

The result of this fraudulent preying on the arty gullible is a straitened, puritanical sub-literature that leaves no taste: it is like drinking water rather than eau de vie. It does not possess the cardinal properties of writing: it is not harrowing or exultant, wondrous or offensive, dystopian or paradisiac. It is a chaste peck on the cheek rather than a tonic offal rub.

It is doubtless useful if you want to pursue a career in greetings cards. Céline, Pope and Swift are, of course, turning in their graves, impatiently awaiting the distraction of the start of the new season. ●

PORTRAIT BY VANESSA DELL

Miriam Elia on...



"Why is St Primark so huge?" says John
"It is the moral, ethical and spiritual heart
of our country," says Mummy.

TAKEN FROM THE FORTHCOMING BOOK *2B: WE SEE THE SIGHTS*, A POST-LOCKDOWN DYSTOPIAN SIGHT-SEEING TOUR OF LONDON, WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY MIRIAM ELIA. PUBLISHED BY DUNG BEETLE BOOKS. AVAILABLE TO PRE-ORDER FROM SEPTEMBER 2022

Letters

Write to The Critic by email at letters@thecritic.co.uk including your address and telephone number

A LIGHT ON PROROGATION

Patrick Lawrence's article on the Supreme Court's prorogation decision is welcome ("ERROR OF JUDGMENT", JUNE). As he notes, the Supreme Court's analysis of justiciability plainly conflated the existence of the power to prorogue with the manner of its exercise. By requiring the government to have "reasonable justification" to exercise the prerogative power, the decision will surely now render other uses of the prerogative a matter for the courts.

The government would likely have had more success if it had acted more honestly. The stated advice to the Queen that five weeks' prorogation was required to write a Queen's Speech was patently disingenuous. If, as Lawrence observes, the prime minister's advice had made it clear why high policy required the prorogation, he would at least have forced the Supreme Court to confront the fact that it was making a decision on a political issue. But paradoxically a witness statement to this effect would itself have been a submission to the court's jurisdiction.

Prorogation had hitherto been seen as potentially a "reserve power" of the monarch, i.e. one which the monarch can exercise (or decline to exercise) in disregard of advice from her ministers. It was notable that the proclamation of the prorogation allowed a week of parliamentary time before it came into effect. The future release of State papers may disclose whether this was due to intervention by the palace, insisting that parliament should have time to enact a Bill preventing the prorogation.

Paul Walker
LONDON

DOWN WITH GOWN

While I agree with Sam Ashworth-Hayes ("MORE TOWN, LESS GOWN", JULY) on the problems caused by a super-abundance of students and degrees, he missed the social, environmental and economic deprivations of "studentification" — when an area previously occupied by families becomes overwhelmingly full of student rentals.

Peaceful, neighbourly areas full of children, adults and OAPs become messy, perpetually noisy, dangerous areas where no-one knows anyone else outside of their multiple occupancy let. This ties in nicely with Dan Hitchens's article ("THE COSA NOSTRA IN SUITS", JULY) which mentions land-banking by large building contractors as a cause in the housing shortage. This is true, but the shortage of family-sized housing, and some OAP housing, is exacerbated by large swathes of what were nice suburbs being turned into hellholes.

I was part of the Nottingham Action Group that tried to do something about the University of Nottingham's reluctance to provide on-site student accommodation. We faced the delusion that there was a thing called a "student area" where normal rules did not apply: for example, students enjoyed randomly walking into the road to scare motorists, and then laugh (while filming on a phone) at the supposedly "up-tight" driver telling them off.

Come the holidays, the area would empty to become a ghost town. Finally, studentification hastened the death of the high street. As students didn't cook, butchers, bakers, greengrocers all closed. Other types of shop became mobile phone outlets or off-licences. The corner shops did, however, survive.

There are similarities here with tourist traps becoming full of holiday lets that price out the locals and ruin the sense of community. Holiday lets appear to be moving up the popular consciousness. "Student areas" should too.

R Lincoln
GROBY, LEICESTERSHIRE

"The doctor said it's a good thing that you were wearing a cycle helmet – it could have been a lot worse."

CARTOON BY LEN HAWKINS

TOO MANY CHEFS

The Secret Author hit the nail squarely on the head regarding the Cheltenham Literature Festival ("THE FAME GAME", JULY). Some years ago, my wife and I attended a superb talk given by Hannah Rothschild about *The Baroness*, her biography of her great-aunt, Baroness Pannonica de Koenigswarter. After the event, we made our way to the signing table where half-a-dozen or so attendees were waiting for the author. At the next table a queue snaked out of the marquee and, possibly, across half of Cheltenham.

On enquiring who would be signing at the next table we were informed it was a "celebrity chef" who had written her latest cookery book. As Hannah said of our small group, "quality not quantity". I had this vision of John Moore (one of the original founders of the Cheltenham Literature Festival) slowly turning in his grave.

Brian Woodcock
CORSE LAWN, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

COURT DISASTER

While President Biden and his progressive pals condemn recent decisions of the US Supreme Court, encourage protestors to picket the homes of justices and remain mute in the face of one attempted assassination, Joshua Rozenberg's article about the need for, and value of, judicial independence in the UK ("INDEPENDENCE: A TWO-WAY STREET", JULY) was a reminder that we may be, in Shaw's words, two countries separated by a common language and yet yearn for the rule of law.

God forbid the UK Supreme Court should ever rule the people and be allowed to vote on such matters as a right to terminate a pregnancy or whether to employ a government agency to destroy an industry without Parliament's permission.

Michael J. Bond
MERCER ISLAND, USA

JOSHUA ROZENBERG ON LAW

Johnson's disrespect for the law

The PM repeatedly showed a cavalier attitude towards constitutional conventions

BORIS JOHNSON WILL go down in history as a prime minister who played fast and loose with the rule of law. That's a much broader concept than merely committing a criminal offence — though Johnson acknowledged having done that, too, by accepting a fixed penalty notice in April for breach of his own government's lockdown regulations.

In August 2019, weeks after he arrived in Downing Street, the prime minister advised the Queen to suspend parliament for an unprecedented five weeks. A month later, the Supreme Court found this unlawful. Some in government thought the court's judgment was poorly reasoned. But Johnson's attempt to govern without parliamentary scrutiny showed a lack of respect for constitutional conventions that was to be repeated throughout his time in office.

HIS PREFERRED BREXIT DEAL left Northern Ireland outside the EU but within the EU's single market for goods. To avoid the need for border checks between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, Johnson agreed with the EU that customs formalities would be completed as goods from Great Britain entered Northern Ireland.

When the Democratic Unionist Party found these arrangements unacceptable, Johnson's government introduced a bill that was intended to break this binding legal agreement in "a very specific and limited way" — as his Northern Ireland secretary put it. The offending provisions were later withdrawn from what became the Northern Ireland Internal Market Act 2020, but not before one of the government's law officers and the head of its legal department had resigned in protest.

A further attempt to break international law was made this year when the Northern Ireland Protocol bill was introduced. The government claimed, utterly implausibly, that a principle called the doctrine of necessity allowed it to override its treaty obligations.

To begin with, some ministers accepted that the aims — restoring power-sharing in Northern Ireland — justified the means. But there were limits. That may have been what Alex Chalk had in mind when he resigned from the government in July.

"To be in government is to accept the duty to argue for difficult or even unpopular positions where that serves the broader national interest," he told Johnson. "But it cannot extend to defending the indefensible."

"This reads not like a piece of legislation but like a speech to a Conservative conference"

CHALK HAD BEEN solicitor general, deputy to the attorney general, Suella Braverman, and, I like to think, a restraining influence on her. Braverman, by contrast, was the most politically active attorney general we have seen in recent times, the first in 750 years to have a spad — a special adviser — of her own.

Johnson allowed her to remain in his caretaker government after she announced that she was a candidate to succeed him. But how could she have given disinterested legal advice to the prime minister she wanted to replace? How could she have given objective opinions on the lawfulness of government policies when she was attacking them in public?

The House of Lords constitution committee has been considering how far the law officers and the lord chancellor are "able to remain impartial, given their position in the executive branch of government". If the committee concludes that it is no longer possible to have your cake and eat it, Johnson will be to blame.

Not content with making Dominic Raab deputy prime minister, Johnson indulged his lord chancellor by allowing him to introduce a curiously named Bill of Rights bill which promised more than it could deliver. Raab wanted to remain signed up to the European human rights convention while discouraging courts in the UK from complying with the way it has been interpreted.

Mark Elliott, professor of public law at the University of Cambridge, said Raab's bill was based on a false premise: "that it is possible to legislate domestically in order somehow to manipulate or magic away treaty obligations that are binding upon the UK as a matter of international law."

Lord Pannick QC was rightly scathing about the bill's first clause, which said that "courts must give the greatest possible weight to the principle that, in a parliamentary democracy, decisions about the balance between different policy aims ... are properly made by parliament". Who would doubt that? "This reads not like a piece of legislation but like a speech to a Conservative party conference," Pannick said. "It is a disgrace and it should not be in a bill."

BRAVERMAN WANTED TO GO further and leave the human rights court — which would mean quitting the 46-member Council of Europe. Making the UK a European outcast like Russia and Belarus was an appalling suggestion. But at least it would have allowed a future government to restrict our human rights in whatever way it chose, something that Raab had promised but could not deliver.

Johnson was notorious for supporting attacks by his ministers on "lefty human rights lawyers". Through those he appointed and the policies they espoused, he encouraged voters to think that the judges were trying to thwart the role of parliament. It was in that sense, above all, that he undermined the rule of law. ●

PORTRAIT BY VANESSA DELL; UKRAINE PRESIDENCY/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Woman About Town

SARAH DITUM

In arcadia ego

FOR THE LAST 20 YEARS, every summer has involved a week in **Scarborough** to visit my husband's family. It's a habit that has accrued its own traditions through repetition. A barbecue at a chalet on the North Bay. A trip to the chrome-plated ice cream parlour on South Bay where my (now adult) nephew will get a "mega" (a

foot-long cone containing all the award-winning flavours, which he's somehow never been defeated by).

Fish and chips, of course. A compulsory dip in the North Sea, regardless of how cold it is. (This year, pre-heatwave, it was a punishing 12 degrees in the water, just 14 on shore. I plunged in and then ran back to the safety of my cardigan.) The British seaside has gained a few shabby chic pretentions, but it's the old-school mix of "bracing" conditions and neon pleasure-seeking that I love best.

And so there's also an afternoon in the arcades, pouring coins into gaudily seductive machines. This year my (almost-adult) daughter was fixated on winning an octopus plush toy from the grabber. She put in a pound. The claw flopped infuriatingly over the toy. She put in a pound. The claw embraced the toy, then turned queasily weak and let it drop. Repeat, repeat, repeat.

Then, she saw a second machine: three pounds, no claw, guaranteed octopus. She took two, and with them a very cuddly lesson in the fact that the house always wins.

IT WAS WHILE I WAS AT the beach hut barbecue that the defenestration of Boris finally kicked off, burgers neglected as the news app notifications poured in. It might not have been a very edifying period in politics, but at least it ended in the most entertaining fashion possible: with recriminations, bitterness and glorious self-owns (come in Nadhim Zahawi, your time is never).

Labour knows how to nurse a grievance. I've been told that the wounds of Miliband vs Miliband still linger in some corridors. Brother turning on brother led to colleagues turning on colleagues, causing traumas that reverberate more than a decade on — never mind the damage done by the Corbyn era.

Still, no one does messy bitch drama like the Tories. My head says give it to Rishi, but my heart says that a Penny premiership is the quickest route back to glorious public bloodletting.

Eery silence

AFTER SCARBOROUGH, TO LONDON to house-sit for a friend. With the intention of getting some writing done, I come alone. But while the space and freedom is welcome, there's an eeriness to being unneeded: since I became a mother at 20, there's always been somebody depending on me.

Repeatedly, I'm jolted out of concentration (and sometimes sleep) by the feeling I should be doing something — fixing dinner, walking the dog, just being at the kitchen table in case someone wants a chat — and then left slightly flat by the realisation that there's nothing to be done.

This, I suppose, is the next transition of motherhood: first you're remoulded into parent mode by pregnancy and birth, and then you have to undo all those habits of care as your children grow into self-sufficiency. The former is raw, physical and marked by people sending you ready meals and nipple cream. The latter is quieter, slower, bittersweet.

This, after all, is the moment you longed for every time you blearily performed a night feed or dealt with a school run tantrum. This is freedom — but freedom to be what? I feel slightly at a loss. For the first day, I keep fighting the urge to fall back into bed.

Parents are often given baby books to record their precious offspring's important firsts: first smile, first word, first wobbly steps. But maybe they should also be given a "self" book to note down all the things they were before the cataclysm of a new life hit them: last frivolously misspent day, last totally impulsive journey, last time the only person you had to think about was you.

Boris Johnson in 1998, 2004, 2011 and 2022

Boris proved as empty as his journalism. Never has anyone pronounced on so much policy with so little bearing on what they went on to do in office

fate was in his hands. His response? A "Guys ... " WhatsApp message to Tory MPs urging them to rally round May. And, more importantly, a refusal to move against her himself.

Had he done so, she could have fallen, in which eventuality he, most likely, would have become leader. He didn't move. Nor did Boris move at May's Chequers summit in July 2018. This was when she locked the cabinet into her doomed Brexit deal. No one resigned until David Davis got back to London. When he did, he obliged Boris to reluctantly and shambolically follow him out of the cabinet, in order to retain his standing as a Brexit champion.

THIS WAS THE NADIR OF BORIS'S POTENTIAL as leader. Commentators and colleagues alike wrote him off as a busted flush. Worse was to come.

May's deal staggered on, into the political Somme of "meaningful votes" (MV1, MV2 and MV3). MV1 met with the heaviest defeat of any piece of government legislation in British parliamentary history. By this point, the Tory party was split every bit as badly as it was in the days of Joe Chamberlain and Tariff Reform. The final national election over which Theresa May presided as leader — the 2019 European parliament vote — brought the worst result in the Conservative Party's existence. It came fifth, with an 8.8 per cent share of the vote.

May and her supporters argued that her deal was the only deal that could be got: get it, or get no Brexit at all. Moreover, reject it and get an election, no Brexit and probably Corbyn too.

A majority of Conservative backbenchers, including Boris, dismissed this argument in MV1. But then Boris, and others, folded as the pressure mounted. It took the 28 "Spartans" of the European Research Group of Tory MPs to defeat the deal on MV3, triggering May's resignation.

Watching Boris at the ERG's pre-vote meeting make the case for supporting May's deal at MV2 would dispel any notion that he had a plan, let alone that his rise was inescapable. His speech was poor, his arguments ultimately unsuccessful. But his fate, like Churchill's over the Norway debacle, was unimpaired.

Ultimately, Johnson argued for May's deal, and voted for it, despite the overwhelming likelihood that if the Tory Party had passed it in 2019, it would have gone into an election that year fatally split, facing a turbo-charged Brexit Party with the rallying cry that Brexit had been betrayed. Boris won because Boris lost.

JUST AS THERESA MAY was the only politician who could fail to win a landslide against an IRA-cheerleading, institutional anti-Semtitism-enabling Marxist, she was also the only person who could make Boris Johnson prime minister. For it was her unique intransigence, and, at every step of her Brexit deal, her sublime political inability which forced the Tory party to turn to him. She worked extremely hard to paint them into this corner. Her central role in his rise should not be ignored.

Boris proved as empty as so much of his journalism. Never has anyone pronounced on so much public policy — Iraq, Afghanistan, the economy, the culture wars — with so little bearing on what they then proceeded to do in office. Even on Brexit, the shadow of the second column looms: for an ineluctable force, Boris all too plausibly could have eluded it as well.

His pagan cynicism allowed him to break the third wall of politics and journalism, by knowingly winking at audiences high and low about the absurdity of the pantomime. Flattered, people and elites alike enabled him to get away with it. Yet so fundamentally rotten was his political position that the great sexual adventurer fell when he ventured to apologise for someone else's misadventures in the Carlton Club. Catching Capone because someone else didn't pay their taxes captures the triviality of it all.

Embarrassingly sophomoric rhetoric about fantasies of state reconstruction vanished with advisors whose bluff was painfully called. But what was Boris supposed to do, other than win?

OVERSTATING THE BROKENNESS OF BRITAIN was central to the 1997 electoral triumph of New Labour. Whether Labour wholly believed their critique, they wholeheartedly put their solutions into effect. Whatever Boris journalistically said at the time, for whatever popular effect, he didn't believe the catastrophic Blairite diagnosis then and there's no reason he can be thought of as sharing it now.

Casting Boris as the instrument of historical forces entirely fails his understanding of them. Intellectuals think Boris became prime minister because the country was broken; Boris knows he became PM because it was working, not least for him.

Boris knew Brexit could be secured so long as there was a prime minister prepared to see it through — it was a restoration at most, and certainly not a revolution. This, more than anything else, explains his equivocal relationship with Brexit after it was done. He had no further use, or plan for it.

For, unlike so many other politicians of his era, Boris Johnson does not see what is not there. He was a prudent gambler who ran out of luck. ●

Christopher Montgomery is the Editor of *The Critic*

***Henry McDonald** says Irish reluctance to support Ukraine presents Unionists with an opportunity to counter American Brit-bashing over the Protocol reforms*

The silence that tells Joe Biden who his real allies are

UKRAINE'S EXISTENTIAL STRUGGLE with Vladimir Putin relies in part on what is being built inside a factory off a drab industrial estate in a corner of East Belfast. Since Russia invaded in February, thousands of NLAW anti-tank missiles have been sent to Ukraine, where they have been used to lethal effect in destroying Russian armour.

The Ukrainians have also deployed Starstreak surface-to-air missiles to reduce the threat from Russian aircraft that have been bombing both military and civilian targets. Both weapon systems are constructed by the French arms manufacturer, Thales, at its base in eastern Belfast which Boris Johnson visited back in June.

He came to thank the firm for building the anti-tank rockets that proved decisive repelling Russian armoured columns menacing Kyiv and Kharkiv in the first few weeks of Putin's "special military operation". About 135 miles south there are other anti-tank weapons lying idle in what used to the British Army's main camp in Ireland and is now the HQ of the Republic of Ireland's defence forces.

These weapons will not end up in Ukrainian hands and will lie dormant in the armouries of the Curragh because although the Irish Republic has small but highly regarded professional armed forces, the state has been unaligned since its inception. The Irish Constitution sees to it that not a single bullet, let alone a bazooka, will be handed over to the Ukrainians fighting for the survival of their country.

UNIONISTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND HAVE NOT been slow to point out the contrast between the deployment of NLAW and Starstreak by the Ukrainian military, and the images posted on Twitter by an ex-Irish Army soldier of stockpiles of unused anti-tank weapons piled up inside the Curragh.

They point (with some justification) to the double standards of the Dublin Government which berates the British over recent moves to replace the Northern Ireland Protocol and their potential to break international law while it doesn't join the international community in providing military assistance to a democratic nation fighting for its existence.

But while Dublin has not lifted a finger, militarily, to aid Ukraine, the coalition government has been doing a bit of "weaponising" elsewhere, most significantly across the Atlantic.

The Irish Government alongside the Irish-American lobby in the US Congress has been seeking, with some success, to persuade the Biden administration to join its campaign against the UK's push to override the Protocol.

It is a line to which Joe Biden is naturally receptive. As far back as September 2020, the then Democratic presidential candidate was warning the British that, "any trade deal between the US and UK must be contingent upon respect for the Agreement and preventing the return of a hard border."

President Biden has since pledged that he is "only a phone call away" if Dublin needs him to put manners on Perfidious Albion and its plot to undermine the post-Brexit trade deal. Why then does the Conservative government risk a trade war with the EU and a possible free trade agreement with the USA in its quest to reform the Protocol? The answer in one word is stability.

The Protocol has destabilised Northern Ireland and its power sharing system that requires that both communities — unionist as well as nationalist — to support it. The unionist parties believe the Protocol has decoupled Northern Ireland economically and constitutionally from Great Britain. All goods coming from the British mainland into the province are now subject to EU customs checks, even those to be consumed within Northern Ireland, with any disputes over trade and other matters in the region to be adjudicated by the European Court of Justice. To unionists, it feels as if the smallest of the four UK nations is being inexorably pulled away from the Union and into the EU's orbit.

TO MANY UNIONISTS, AS ALSO TO BBC and Channel 4 News producers and reporters, it appears the pro-Union population is being caught in a diplomatic pincer movement with the combined forces of Dublin, Brussels and Washington ranged against them. Yet the Ukraine war provides unionism with an opportunity. Already some in Washington are questioning the wisdom of the White House's Brit-bashing. First up was John Bolton, the former US national security adviser, who wrote in the *Telegraph* in June that America's interests lie in siding with the UK, its most important Nato ally.

Mr Bolton characterised the anti-British rhetoric over the Protocol from the likes of the Congressional Speaker, Nancy Pelosi, and US Congressman and friend of Gerry Adams, Richard Neal, as "distant from hard reality". He said the EU's use of the

CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES

Online worship: the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby celebrates Holy Communion at his kitchen table on Easter Sunday 2020

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY SAMIR HUSSEIN/GETTY IMAGES

there, Butler responded it was "because, for good reason, the whole picture is not available to you". It still remains unavailable to anyone, except to the members of the Archbishops' Council who themselves charted the route and set the compass.

In August 2020 Canon Giles Fraser questioned the wisdom of the archbishops' approach in *the Daily Telegraph*, noting that in the plight of the parish churches "the response of the centre to the cry of the periphery always tends to be — and here I inwardly groan — the announcement of yet another fancy-sounding yet ultimately vacuous missionary initiative". Fraser also named what he saw as a serious threat to the future of parishes coming "from those whose very job it should be to defend it". He was denounced by Butler in a letter to the editor, in which he intimated that Fraser ran a failing parish and should instead "focus on doing something to arrest this worrying slump".

With friends like these, who needs enemies? At the end of 2021 the clergy of the province of Canterbury voted with their feet and did not re-elect Butler as their prolocutor; they chose the Venerable Luke Miller, the genial Archdeacon of London, to represent them instead.

IT HAS NOT STOPPED BUTLER FROM airing his views; one of his latest targets was the then-ordinand Calvin Robinson. Robinson's sin was to have become known to be a conservative Christian with traditional views on a range of topics, including gender politics and the sacraments.

An accomplished communicator, Robinson had had no trouble sharing his beliefs with a wider audience on various media platforms, including GB News.

"Who on earth was his sponsoring bishop?" asked Butler. "Are there not limits of behaviour that need to be reinforced?" Meanwhile, it has since transpired that the Bishop of Edmonton, the Rt Revd Robert Wickham, who also ministers in the diocese of London, was privately suggesting to senior colleagues that Robinson perhaps ought not to be ordained.

Writing in the *Church Times*, Canon Angela Tilby observed "it is obvious that some of our senior clergy live in a *Guardian* readers' echo chamber, in which right-wing views are more heretical than disbelief in the Trinity". One might think that at a time of freefall the Church of England might have been glad of an effective champion in the public square — especially one with a significant internet following in the context of the recent online-worship drive — but it is as though the powers that be believed that no-one else could possibly take Robinson's position seriously.

They forgot, of course, that many members of the Church of England tend to be more conservatively-minded than those who get appointed to high office. With his ordination in jeopardy, Robinson left the CofE and was ordained instead by the Free Church of England. As it happens, both bodies share an ecumenical arrangement, so under the C of E's own rules Robinson can now officiate at as many Church of England services as there are incumbents who are willing to invite him.

THE ROBINSON AFFAIR HAS EXPOSED serious problems at the top of the Church of England's leadership structures. Emails that have come to light as a result of Robinson's subject access request, which he has shared online, show that some senior figures pursued agendas in ways that suggest that the bunker mentality is firmly entrenched. Most startling were those relating to the Archbishop of Canterbury's comments about Robinson's situation, which were reported in the *Church Times* in May: "I haven't been involved at all in that case."

The correspondence tells a different story. An email to Dr Emma Ineson, the Bishop to the Archbishops, demonstrates that Welby, after being tipped off by Wickham, had asked to see examples of Robinson's tweets as early as December 2021. Robinson has described Welby's comments as representing "a flexible and transitory relationship with the truth"; in the absence of any clarification from Lambeth Palace, it is hard to disagree.

Tilby shares neither Robinson's theology nor his politics. Nevertheless she argues that "we need conservative thinkers if we are indeed the national Church, not least to challenge the lazy, hand-wringing leftist orthodoxies that refuse to enter debate". Conservative thinkers may be needed, but the Robinson affair suggests that they're not necessarily wanted. Tilby called it "a monumental own goal" for the C of E, "which will now have to cope with him on TV in his clerical collar [...] politely, but accurately, bewailing our moral and theological spinelessness".

The Church of England urgently needs leaders who are able to self-scrutinize, to model inclusivity in a way that does not seek to exclude, to represent the people of this nation in more diverse aspects than mere outward appearance, and finally to recognise that management and leadership models that have obsessed the C of E for decades have not necessarily been entirely to its benefit. Where those leaders are now going to come from, however, God only knows. ●

Wining and dining = reconciling

If turbulent priests can reach an accord over food and drink, then so can politicians

A FUNNY THING happened on the way to the Forum. Well, not the Forum strictly speaking. I mean the General Synod of the Church of England — but as forum and synod share much of a meaning (as places of meeting for coming together and deliberation) I stand with the funny thing happening on the way to the Forum. And, indeed, at it.

The Church of England, for all its reputation as being a bit wet, is not known for being especially peaceable. That brings with it a great burden: we are always seen scrapping in public, and those whose churches like to pretend to a uniformity of thought enjoy sneering at the church which allows true contestation of thought and theology.

This is nothing new. Look, for example, at T.S. Eliot's opening to his (incredibly long) essay on the Lambeth Conference in 1930:

> The Church of England washes its dirty linen in public. It is convenient and brief to begin with this metaphorical statement. In contrast to some other institutions both civil and ecclesiastical, the linen does get washed. To have linen to wash is something; and to assert that one's linen never needed washing would be a suspicious boast.

Now with the washing of dirty linen often comes quite a bit of acrimony; people focus anger (righteous or otherwise) on their opponents, and say things which makes reconciliation less likely.

THIS IS NOTHING NEW. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians doesn't pull many punches (it's a lot more interesting than the passage so often chosen for weddings), and his letter to the Galatians is so intemperate he wishes that those arguing for the circumcision of his new Christian converts would see their knife slip and castrate themselves. (How can people say the Bible is boring?)

In the Church of England, we're a little more middle of the road than that, but bishops generally do not like criticism or challenge. The Save the Parish movement, born a year ago this month, has seen its leaders chided as "rascally voices" by Archbishops, and roundly condemned by certain more excitable bishops (generally the ones closing parishes). They have, in their turn, received their share of brickbats too.

But something happened on the way to the Forum. We actually spoke. Properly, rather than intemperately across the pages of the media or formally in a strip-light-lit meeting room. Once a year the General Synod meets in York, the C of E's way of reminding its south-heavy mindset that one of our two Provinces is in the colder half of the kingdom, and centred around the ancient second city of England.

SO ONCE A YEAR WE ALL trundle up to York and get whisked to its margins and incarcerated in the student rooms of the university there, a little too far from anywhere else to avoid having to share meals and bars with all of the other delegates there, regardless of their theological, philosophical, or political opinions. And over much food and much drink, we talked.

And much good seemed to come of it. The sessions were marked with much more respect than the others I have been on. The Archbishop of York came to the Save the Parish conference and was interrogated by Giles Fraser. The Archbishop of Canterbury expressed himself surprised to find himself on the same side of an argument as me. Much discussion was had in the margins of the hard work of our team of financiers and auditors who have been going through the Church's budgets (and there are many of them, spread across all the 42 dioceses and all the national church institutions).

The Archbishop of York came to the conference and was interrogated by Giles Fraser

And much talking was done. It remains to be seen if talk turns into any action, but talking has begun — and it began over much food and much wine.

WHICH IS WHY WE need to be so careful of the siren voices of modern Puritans calling for an end to the food and drink which our politicians enjoy in the Palace of Westminster. It is when you socialise with those you disagree with that you make friends, discover shared passions, and uncover surprising points of convergence.

A parliament which only meets to debate is one made for conflict. As more and more of our discourse gets sucked into the vortex of the Culture War this is the very last thing we should be encouraging. By contrast, we need our politicians, of all stripes, to remember what is good, decent, and human about their opponents.

And they will do that over food and, even more importantly, over drink. It's where the human starts to the show, where the barriers come down, where honesty starts to emerge. It's where we show each other our weaknesses.

Seeing those weaknesses, and sharing our own, when safely in our cups, makes us a little less inclined to shout over our opponents (who may now be our friends) and a little more inclined to talk with them. We may not convince them; they may not convince us. But we might understand each other, and that is half the battle. ●

PORTRAIT BY VANESSA DELL; C OF E

How a Catholic institution capitulated to the non-binary gods of diversity

FAREWELL TO ST BENET'S HALL

Joseph Shaw

"OXFORD, HOME OF LOST CAUSES, and forsaken beliefs and unpopular names and impossible loyalties." Such was Matthew Arnold's description, and its truth, though diminishing through time, has been part of its greatness. Oxford harboured John Wycliffe, and defied Henry VIII's demand for academic support for his divorce. It concealed persecuted Catholics and outlawed Jacobites. Its students still wear academical dress to sit exams, and ply its rivers in bizarre craft powered by long sticks. And it is home to some very eccentric institutions.

One of the most eccentric, St Benet's Hall, is now closing.

Few of the founding principles of Oxford's constituent "houses" would be allowed today. One, founded to support clerics who would pray for the dead of the battle of Agincourt, is today one of the most prestigious academic institutions on the globe: All Souls College.

Others, of more recent vintage, are affiliated to various versions of Protestantism, or belong to different Catholic religious orders. These are "Permanent Private Halls", of which St Benet's was one. These are granted the right to admit students by the University, like colleges, but with less autonomy, and unlike colleges they are not self-governing academic communities. Instead, the Halls are ultimately the responsibility of trustees.

They were founded — to simplify a little — in order to make possible the participation in the university of Catholic religious (Benedictine monks, Capuchin Franciscan Friars, Jesuits, and Dominicans), or of non-Catholic seminarians (Baptist, low and high Anglican, Unitarian). Professed religious and seminarians, it was felt, could not simply join an ordinary college: they needed a residence and intellectual community of their own.

The Unitarian one became a college in 1996 and is today for practical purposes indistinguishable from its peers: Harris Manchester College. The Capuchins closed theirs, Greyfriars Hall, in 2008, due to the order's lack of interest in it. After supplementing its Benedictine students with lay ones in 1990, St Benet's's fate long looked like a choice between these two options. It has now gone the way of Greyfriars.

I HAVE HAD A UNIQUELY LONG ASSOCIATION with St Benet's, coming up as an undergraduate in 1991, doing my graduate degrees there, and later taking up a teaching role. When I arrived, it was still full of monks, either doing theology with a view to priestly ordination, or degrees in subjects they intended to teach in various Benedictine schools.

WITH HINDSIGHT IT WAS PERHAPS INEVITABLE THAT ITS OWNER, AMPLEFORTH ABBEY, WOULD USE IT AS A DUMPING GROUND FOR PAEDOPHILES

With hindsight it was perhaps inevitable that its owner, the Benedictine community of Ampleforth Abbey, and the wider Benedictine world on whose behalf it ran the Hall, would use it as they used their other assets, schools and parishes, as a dumping ground for paedophiles. At least two of these passed through the place in my time, plus some of their facilitators and protectors, because it was a dignified holding-pen away from their schools.

There was nothing malicious about this: a monastic superior has to put his people somewhere, and the attitude of the day — between 15 and 30 years ago — was that they had an obligation to help even those who had been forced to leave

ST-BENETS.OX.AC.UK

their community. By the same token we received into our bosom various individuals whose seniority meant they had to be found something to do, but whose personality was such that they couldn't remain in the community.

There is a long-standing popular narrative about clerical abuse in the Catholic Church, that links it to the Church's unique traditions: celibacy, the special character of the clerical state, and perhaps the sexual repression implicit in its moral teaching. This narrative has become difficult to uphold now that it has turned out that sports coaches, secular boarding schools, boy scouts, the Church of England, and the BBC, have been afflicted with problems of a strikingly similar nature.

It was not the celibacy or priestly self-understanding of BBC executives, or their commitment to traditional sexual mores, which led them to excuse Jimmy Savile, cover up his crimes, and dismiss his accusers. It was a consciousness of the embarrassment and complication of taking seriously the misdeeds of a member of their own elite set, coupled with a sense that his wrongdoing was not really that serious. It turns out that it was not Christianity, but the denial of its moral framework, above all the special importance attributed to sexuality by traditional Christianity, which set the scene for the child abuse crisis.

MAURICE SAVAGE/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

ST BENEDICT WOULD HAVE TRIED TO REFORM PROBLEMATIC MONKS WITH WHIPPING. THE OLDER I GET, THE MORE I SEE HIS POINT

IN PLACE OF THE SUPPOSEDLY HARSH and outmoded moral principles of Christianity has come what we might call a therapeutic mentality, vaguely Freudian in inspiration, focused on the wrongdoer, whatever kind of wrong it might be. Thus, one religious superior informed me, with an air of profound wisdom, that he would not tell an alcoholic member of his community, currently at the Hall, to stop drinking. "It has to come from him," he said.

In the meantime, he told me, controlling the antics of the narcissist the community had sent to run the Hall was the responsibility of me and my colleagues, a task for which we had absolutely no formal powers. When this individual complained to him that the Fellows were being difficult, the superior would be able to sympathise fraternally. I think the technical term for this pastoral approach is "accompaniment".

St Benedict would have tried to reform such problematic monks with whipping, and fasting on bread and water, and then thrown them out. The older I get, the more I see his point. At any rate, replacing a more robust traditional approach with the therapeutic one has not gone well. The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, set up in 2014 and still sitting, has not been kind to the Ampleforth community and its school, or to the other Benedictine communities, such as Downside and Fort Augustus, which were served by St Benet's. The deep sympathy and compassion, which religious superiors displayed towards abusers, was not matched by a concern for the principles of justice and sexual integrity, which should have protected their victims.

As the Catholic priest and psychologist, T.V. Moore, noted in the 1950s, there is a deep incompatibility between Catholic teaching and what I am calling the therapeutic approach. The replacement of the first by the second in the heart of what should be the spiritual powerhouses of the Catholic Church, the monasteries, is part of a profound loss of self-confidence. Inevitably, such conflicted institutions attract few vocations, and their future is not bright.

This lack of self-confidence was reflected in the attitude the community had to their bridgehead into one of the world's greatest universities. Although a great deal was said about the Catholic ethos of the Hall, and the usefulness of its Benedictine traditions in establishing an environment for academic enquiry, there seemed to be no understanding of the Hall's potential as an academic institution as such: the value to the Church and also to the world of a place where Catholic traditions of thought could be discussed and developed, and where students and scholars could encounter a Catholic academic community in the wider context of Oxford University.

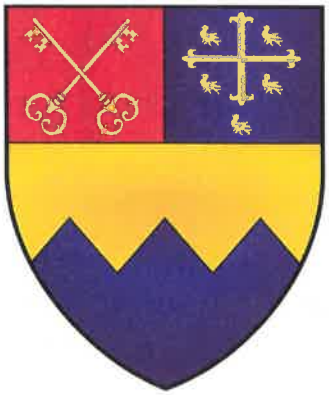
AS THE SUPPLY OF MONKS DIMINISHED and the role of lay academic staff and lay trustees increased, this incomprehension of the Hall's potential as an academic institution continued to be on display. Appointments, visiting speakers, Junior Common Room policies, and everything else, were consistently judged on the basis of whether they increased or displayed "diversity", which meant that as often as possible they had to cut against the grain of the Catholic identity of the Hall.

This identity continued to be applauded, officially, as what made the Hall unique and valuable, but the successive people appointed to nurture it were either unwilling to do so, or simply had no idea how to go about it. As time passed the student body and the Fellowship increased in size, from a very low base, but the number of Catholics involved remained stuck at two or three Fellows and a handful of students.

The final form of St Benet's Hall, with contraceptives in the bathrooms and a Pride flag draped pathetically over the balcony railings, for want of a flagpole, represented what Cardi-

nal Walter Kasper — no stick-in-the-mud conservative, he — criticised as the disappearance of the Catholic dialogue partner in the course of inter-religious dialogue. There can be no conversation between the Catholic tradition and anything else, if the Catholics are no longer there to carry it on, or if they are no longer distinctively Catholic.

St Benet's is in no way exceptional in this regard; the slow self-asphyxiation of Catholic institutions is in fact the rule, but it is not just Catholic bodies that have lost their way intellectually.



One of the roles I fulfilled at St Benet's involved attending meetings with colleagues from other colleges on "equality and diversity". Oxford places more reliance on academics for such things, and less on professional administrators, than most universities. The extreme tedium of these events was only occasionally relieved. On one occasion the subject arose of the discomfort felt by students from China at being included in the category of "Black and Minority Ethnic", or BME.

They did not regard themselves as members of an ethnic minority in any meaningful sense, and their needs and experiences had little in common with the major constituents of this sprawling category. A senior academic at this meeting remarked, in a musing way, that race was in general a socially constructed concept. It was a remarkable moment because, at this enormous table surrounded by highly educated people, someone had engaged, intellectually, with woke ideology. But it was just a moment.

IT WAS ACTUALLY VERY IMPORTANT for us that Asian students be included in the BME category. First, woke ideologues would have it so: for them, Chairman Mao would count as oppressed just because of his ethnicity. Secondly, including completely inappropriate components in a category of the supposedly disadvantaged makes the targets so much easier to attain. How do we get a certain percentage of BME students into the University? Never mind about British ethnic minorities in dreadful schools; we can fill our boots with highly educated overseas students from south-east Asia, seasoned with the offspring of Arab and Nigerian millionaires.

Not that anyone would actually say this — or perhaps even allow themselves to articulate it clearly in thought. But it is an administrative solution to the ideological problem.

Any one of my colleagues, in that room, could have eviscerated wokism, intellectually, in a few pithy sentences, and many, I have no doubt, would have liked to do so. But that is not what we were there to do. Faced with an ideological threat to the entire raison d'etre of the University — elite education in the Western intellectual tradition — their response has been administrative accommodation. On the major issue of the day, the secular liberal academic community has disappeared as a dialogue partner. They have lost confidence in their own tradition. Instead of making some kind of intellectual response to this existential threat, they have, quite literally, run up the rainbow flag.

This capitulation is not without victims. At the same meeting — or possibly another equally tedious one — the representative of some group of woke students made an appeal for funding for the needs of the gender-non-conforming. There was a moment of mild panic until it was made clear that they were not asking us to fund anything expensive, such as major surgery, just relatively cheap things like breast-binders, which unfortunately (they explained) have to be shipped over from America.

The relief was palpable. Naturally, was the response, we can find the money for that kind of thing! The attitude of thrift is heart-warming, of course, but what was missing from the discussion was any consideration of the implications of these items for the physical or psychological health of the students. It will take another vast official inquiry, perhaps 20 years from now, to probe the complicity of the University, and similar institutions, in the grave harm caused by ill-considered "gender affirming" policies and interventions.

IT WAS NOT SO LONG AGO THAT IT WAS hard work to get dogmatic secular liberals to take alternative intellectual traditions, of any kind, seriously. The liberal loss of self-confidence has not improved the situation, however. I think I would rather be called a silly fool by Bertrand Russell or Anthony Grayling, than be no-platformed by a mob of students whose colleges are terrified of contradicting them.

In this context, the idea of a distinctively Catholic institution within the University was an uncomfortable one, not only for the Benedictines, but for the University itself. In order for an academic institution to have a real intellectual life, in order for it to have the *magnanimitas*, the greatness of soul, for viewpoint diversity, it must have self-confidence. When Ampleforth Abbey announced that it needed urgently to sell the buildings — for reasons which have not been disclosed — a moment arrived, to my own astonishment, when funding was offered to buy them, richly endow the Hall, and keep the show on the road.

The difficulty was that, inevitably enough, the source of the funds were people who actually believed in the possibility of a Catholic institution, and wanted, in a modest way, to see this possibility realised.

This made the University uncomfortable, and they did not let the Hall accept the money. ●

Joseph Shaw is a philosopher and chairman of the Latin Mass Society

ST BENET'S

pointed out in a speech last year that the increase in the 50s age-bracket is just where people accumulate wealth most rapidly (they have high earning power and fewer dependents). This will be deflationary.

The other obvious objection is Japanification — the persistent failure of inflation to rear its head in Japan however high their debt goes, as an economy adjusts to gerontocracy. We're a little behind Japan, but they are forecast to hit a dependency ratio of over 80 per cent by 2040, with a dementia rate of 4 per cent.

The key argument is that Japan had an option not open to us: as their demographics went through the nightmare we're about to encounter, they were able to move production to neighbouring low-cost countries. This has allowed them to sustain a 2 per cent per year improvement in per capita productivity even as their economy barely grows, and a lot of their manufacturing base is now in the near-abroad. Looking ahead, those productivity numbers are figures to envy.

THE BEST COUNTER-ARGUMENT TO MOST complicated matters are the "unknowns" — how many of the really big events of the past few decades were usefully foreseeable? There are so many possibilities that could change the story: a cure for dementia, cracking the nut of fusion power, a really nasty pandemic, political upheaval, but it'll probably be unknown unknowns invisible from where we stand. Helpfully vague.

To bring the story bang up to date, the ONS have just released their 2021 census, which revealed nearly 2 million more pensioners in England and Wales compared to a decade ago but a quarter million fewer under-4s, 350,000 fewer people between 15 and 24, and 650,000 fewer people in their 40s: these age-groups should have been the engine-room of our economy over the next decades.

It might be worth panning out again to put this in context: retirees made up 13 per cent of the UK population in 1970, 16 per cent by 2010 and as of the 2021 census that figure is now 19 per cent. (For reference, a third of Japan is now over 65, and they sell more nappies for the elderly than for babies.)

As this trend continues, the number of high-dependency over 85s in this country is expected to double in the next 20 years and the proportion of the UK population living with dementia is forecast to increase from 1.5 per cent to 2.5 per cent of the population, putting huge pressure on social care and healthcare.

WE AREN'T ENORMOUSLY out of step with the rest of the world; the global population with dementia is forecast to treble in the next 30 years, and it's going to be the biggest problem that nobody is talking about. Theresa May thought that being honest about the need to grasp the funding-of-social-care nettle would be a good thing to mention to an electorate. But regardless of the current arguments on immigration policy, it is looking like the scarce resource of the future is going to be labour — workers to look after us in our dotage.

Inevitably, having such a top-heavy demographic profile is starting to get seriously expensive; our NHS consumes around 44 per cent of day-to-day public spending from departmental budgets, up from around 27 per cent a generation ago.

The recent increase in National Insurance will disappear into its gaping maw without trace; there is already talk of healthcare workers striking. Social care is now, infamously, so lamentably underfunded that hospitals grind to a halt because there is nowhere to discharge recovered elderly patients.

The amount of money required is close to unfathomable. It will have to come primarily from tax increases because assuming that the Bank of England will allow real rates to remain negative to steadily deflate the impact of continued borrowing on public debt, the appeal of government bonds for international investors withers.

Workers and pensioners both have leverage, increases in tax rates are themselves inflationary. We are in a debt trap after the profligacy of our response to the financial crisis and Covid. Even before the pandemic, the OBR forecast that public sector net debt would increase from about 80 per cent of GDP to nearly 300 per cent of GDP over the next 35 years. No politician has plausibly explained how this will be funded.

Perhaps we need to send tugs into the Channel to tow unsuspecting boats of workers towards our grateful shores; perhaps we could repurpose Nigel Farage's "Breaking Point" poster as a job advertisement in the red-hot carer market for an increasingly geriatric population. If the alternative is 50-year mortgages and taxes on the childless, then we are already in crazy policy territory.

CARTOON BY ED NAYLOR

Al Haimes has worked with data professionally for 25 years

Beware of the tax-cutters

Slashing the tax take now will lead to increased public spending for years to come

TAX-CUTTING TORYISM has been on the rampage. Most of the early Conservative leadership candidates have committed to tax cuts, and in some cases these were to be early and big. The claim was that these would reflect the candidate's support for Thatcherism, with its signature themes of a small state and low public spending.

The truth is not so simple. There is a problem here of what economists sometimes call "time-inconsistency", although that phrase has a rather different connotation in the highbrow journals. Public expenditure is of two kinds: payments of interest on the national debt and outlays on all other items. The earlier and bigger are tax cuts, the sooner and more rapidly does the budget deficit increase. Further, the larger is the budget deficit, the faster are the increases in the national debt and debt interest.

This implies a paradoxical and unwelcome result. Tax cuts now enlarge the size of the state in the years to come and increase the future burden of public spending. Margaret Thatcher was well aware of the vicious dynamics of indebtedness. That is why her government put strong public finances before low taxation. In the celebrated 1981 budget her first chancellor of the exchequer, Sir Geoffrey Howe, increased taxes in a recession.

He wanted to ensure the budget deficit would be on a downward path over the medium term. Thatcher certainly approved the budget. Indeed, 10 Downing Street — not No. 11 or the Treasury — is sometimes said to have been the source of the ideas behind it.

THE ARGUMENT MAY SEEM a little theoretical. After all, does it not imply the pessimistic message that — for any given pair of ratios of public expenditure and budget deficit to gross domestic product — tax cuts are always counter-productive in the long run? That is in fact the message, unless tax cuts result in a stronger rate of output growth and hence a larger tax base.

The supply-side school of the 1980s pressed this proposition in their advocacy of President Reagan's tax cuts. But under Reagan the United States Federal debt exploded relative to GDP. By contrast, during the 1979-97 Conservative governments a key achievement was that a fall in the ratio of public debt to GDP was accompanied by a drop in taxes.

Yields on government bonds have risen sharply — with a nasty effect on debt interest

THE NUB OF THE MATTER is that a society known for the strength of its public finances enjoys the confidence of financial markets. Investors are therefore prepared to buy its government's debt at a low rate of interest, and that limits the debt interest bill. On the other hand, irresponsible tax cuts forfeit investors' respect and their willingness to acquire new debt issues. As Rishi Sunak was warned by Treasury civil servants ahead of his final bust-up with Boris Johnson, the UK has already run into serious trouble on this score.

Yields on government bonds have risen sharply, with a nasty effect on debt interest. To quote from the documents that accompanied the 2022 budget:

> Debt interest spending is forecast to reach £83 billion next year [2022-3] — the highest nominal spending ever and the highest relative to GDP in over two decades. This is nearly four times the amount spent on debt interest last year [£23.6 billion in 2020/21] and exceeds the budgets for day-to-day departmental spending on schools, the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice combined.

These words must have struck home and perhaps explain the caution of Sunak's recent statements on tax and spending. An important consideration here is that past episodes of heavy deficits — and then of surges in public indebtedness — have often coincided with recessions, as recessions hit tax revenues and boost benefit expenditure.

On past form, the Bank of England will be able to bring inflation down from an almost double-digit annual rate only by increasing interest rates, curbing demand and causing a recession. If so, the present moment is not the right time to be rushing into tax cuts.

Boris Johnson's premiership was important because it did deliver Brexit, but no one can applaud its financial record. The jump in the number of civil servants and the undue expansion of government can be blamed on Covid-19 to a large extent, but there have been too many reports of a tendency to over-promise, regardless of cost.

IF THERE IS ANY -ISM THAT will be attached to the Johnson period, it is not Thatcherism, but cakeism. Boris, often said to be rather improvident in his personal financial affairs, was inclined, as prime minister, to spend beyond the limit and to want his cake of lower taxes too.

The indulgence in tax-cut rhetoric may have been intended to establish the leadership contenders' Thatcherite image with the Conservative party membership. There can be little doubt that for most of them Thatcher was an iconic figure who rescued Britain from its 1970s reputation as "the sick man of Europe".

But unearned tax cuts — tax cuts that cannot be justified by previous reductions in the ratio of public expenditure to GDP — should instead be viewed as Johnsonian cakeism at its worst. ●

PORTRAIT BY VANESSA DELL; GOD4ATHER/GETTY IMAGES

Richard Negus says today's environmentalist movement owes much to the ideology of Britain's pre-war far-Right, including the author of *Tarka the Otter*

BLOOD AND SOIL: THE GREENS' FASCIST ROOTS

MENTION HENRY WILLIAMSON and it brings to mind the cool waters of the Devonshire Taw and Torridge, of deep wooded combes, a dog otter named Tarka and its canine nemesis Deadlock. *Tarka The Otter* has remained in print since it was first published in 1927 and is still considered by many as the benchmark by which nature writers are judged.

Despite being an author who Ted Hughes said "made me feel the pathos of actuality in the natural world" through his animal series and discourses on English agrarian social history, Williamson was something of a townie. Born in 1885 in Lewisham it was not until his family moved to then "leafy" Ladywell that the boy enjoyed grass under his feet and muck in his nails.

On family holidays to Devon he immersed himself utterly in nature, vowing to live in the county as soon as he was able. He cycled up from Kent to the North Norfolk coast, encountering his first otter on the way. There he honed the hopeless and complete love of a convert for the wildlife-rich pastoral he discovered. Later, he mentally escaped to this bucolic Arcadia from his dugout on the Western Front.

Williamson's name as a writer is synonymous with nature, yet his literary triumphs also include largely forgotten dissections of human life and death in the trenches. His martial memoir *The Wet Flanders Plain* (1929) and the semi-autobiographical novel, *The Patriot's Progress* (1930), stand up today, chronicling his own war initially as a Tommy witnessing the 1914 Christmas Truce to trench foot and a dose of gas as a commissioned officer in the Machine Gun Corps. The mud, brutality and misplaced patriotic zeal that he witnessed in France doubtless sharpened Williamson's longing for the honest purity of countryside and nature. It was also the catalyst that made him a lifelong fascist.

WILLIAMSON'S EXPERIENCE OF THE TRENCHES IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR MADE HIM A LIFELONG FASCIST

OVER THE PAST 18 MONTHS, WITH A nagging sense of déjà vu, I have found myself drawn to re-read Williamson. The politics he espoused, with its near-religious linking of nature, farming and landscape, sometimes obliquely, often overtly, finds more than common cause with the ideology of the modern green movement.

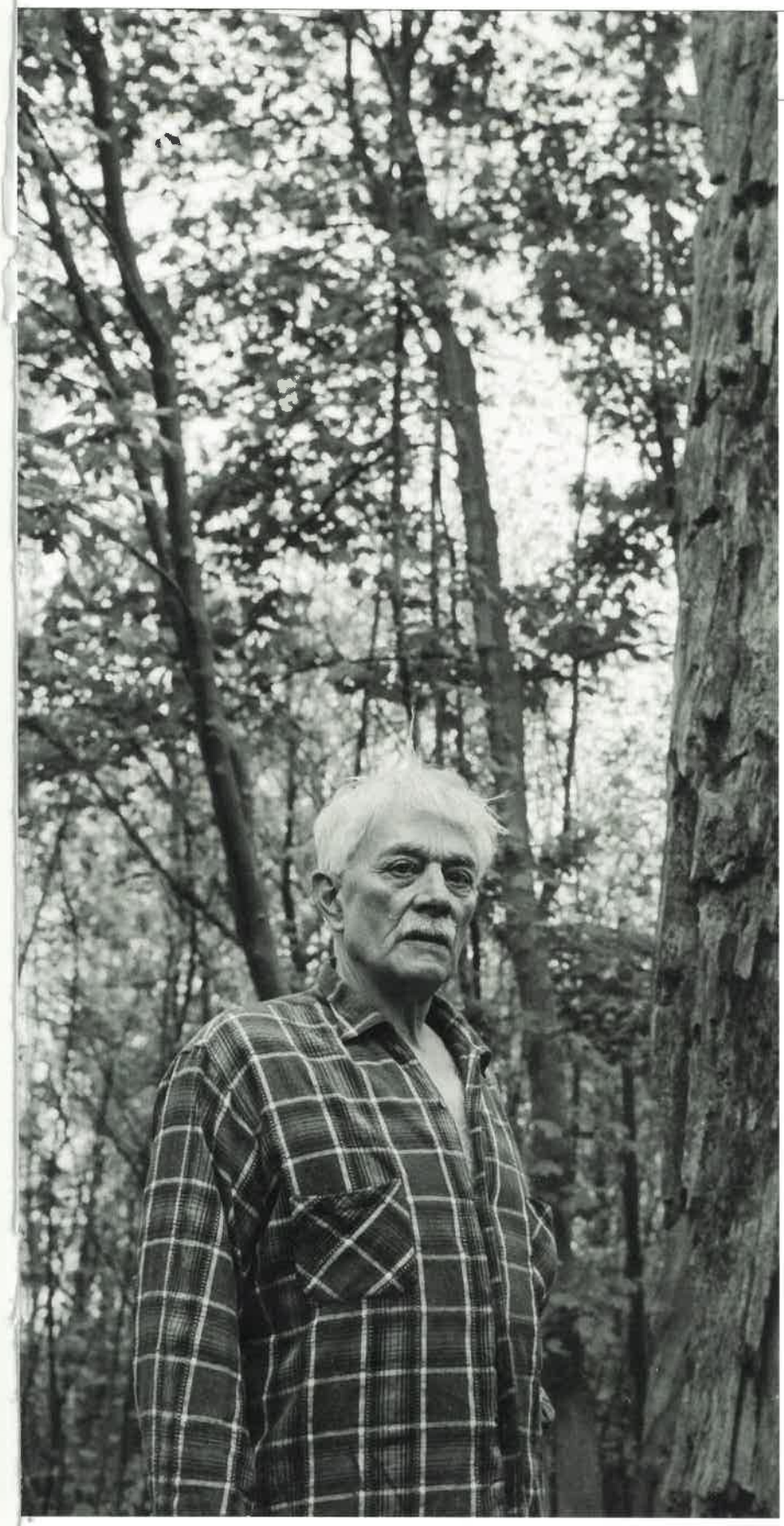
Policies advanced by the Green Party today — support for small family farms, organicism and soil health, state restrictions on chemical fertilizer and pesticide use, food security and a top-down advocacy for a meat-free diet — were previously devised and championed by Richard Walther Darré, the Reich's minister of food and agriculture. This should come as no surprise.

Whilst we naturally think of national socialism primarily in terms of racism, repression and brutality, its roots lay in campaigning against faceless financiers and industrialists. It was these fat cats, the fascists claimed, who had orchestrated and profited from the Great War's destruction and would do so again in a heartbeat. George Monbiot, the high priest of today's British environmentalists, echoes the refrain, proclaiming, "trashing the planet and hiding the money isn't a perversion of capitalism. It is capitalism."

The antidote prescribed by environmentalists, whether of the 1930s or the 2020s, to capitalism's destruction of the planet is a re-focusing of attention on farming and the soil. In 1936, Williamson turned his back on Devon, the "two rivers" and its wildlife, saying he had "outgrown the place". He headed east, to Norfolk, buying the near-derelict Old Hall Farm at Stiffkey with the proceeds of the 20 books he had by then published.

There he put the theories of "blood and soil" into practice, becoming, in effect, a demonstration farm for Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF). Williamson, by then 42 years old, threw himself into the role of farmer with the same compulsion he exhibited when morphing from suburban youth into adult countryman.

IN *THE STORY OF A NORFOLK FARM* (1941) he recounts the physical and philosophical journey he took in turning the farm's worn-out soil back into fertile land. This tome is more politically overt than his nature writing. A complete novice, he learns how to farm on the job, blaming early crop failures on historic over-use and abuse of the land.



EVENING STANDARD/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

He rails against the agricultural policies of the political establishment that hamper his efforts and blends modern farming technology with the traditional — repeatedly waxing on the delights of ploughing with his new-fangled "little grey Fergie" tractor, whilst idolising Bob and Jimmy Sutton, the "hearty yeomen" who work for him with their team of heavy horses.

Photographs that accompany a series of articles he wrote on farming for the *Eastern Daily Press* portray Bob and Jimmy, as the very beau ideal of fascist manhood. At the same time, Williamson becomes frustrated at his neighbouring farmer's reluctance or inability to change from soil-sapping ways and adopt his combination of organicism and modernity.

Throughout the book, Williamson makes references to the regular meetings he holds with his "Leader" and a group of like-minded agrarian thinkers. His leader is clearly Mosley, a man who wouldn't know a plough from a post box, yet the other members of the group were markedly more authentic agrarians. They included Lucilla Reeve, a water-divining feminist, Breckland mixed farmer and country diarist; Rolf Gardiner, a Dorset farmer, naturist and folklorist; and Jorian Jenks, a Sussex farmer, politician and author of *The Land and the People* (1937), the BUF's official agricultural policy.

These characters, who on the surface sound worthy of Wodehouse, were not only well-educated but had a proven track record in farming and practical conservation, a trait rarely seen in postulating environmentalists today. Reeve was locally regarded as either a spy or a witch and Gardiner was something of a dreamer and middle-class hippy, as happy dancing a country reel or analysing the flora of the woodland floor as he was advocating Social Credit and the Green Shirts (a youth-led environmental direct action organisation, anticipating the modern day tactics of Extinction Rebellion).

Jenks was less spiritual than his comrades and more widely regarded in mainstream politics as a practical environmental and agrarian thinker. His farming career was a stop-start affair due to the combination of the 1930s agricultural depression and his own chronic asthma.

WILLIAMSON, JENKS AND ROLF, DESPITE their wartime arrest (and in Jenks's case lengthy detention under the Defence Regulation 18B in 1940 as a potential threat to the defence of the realm), continued with their environmental activism. Politically, they lobbied to raise awareness of environmental

THE SOIL ASSOCIATION IS PROUD OF LADY EVE BALFOUR (ABOVE), BUT JENKS AND GARDINER HAVE BEEN CANCELLED

issues that they believed were ignored by the 1947 Agriculture Act.

That legislation promoted highly mechanised, intensive farming systems, culminating in today's high input/high output industrial farming, the practice widely attributed as the culprit for Britain's biodiversity loss and environmental decline. Jenks concluded in 1945 that to counter industrialised farming he would join forces with the farmer Lady Eve Balfour, who herself had been mightily inspired by Gardiner's experiments with organics.

Together they co-founded the Soil Association. Jenks went on to become the lead theorist in the organic movement, writing a number of books on soil health and nutrition and becoming editor of *Mother Earth*, the Soil Association's in-house magazine, a role he held until his death in 1963.

The Soil Association today remains proud of Balfour and her organic farming trials at New Bells Farm in Suffolk, as well as her radicalism, sexuality and opposition to the Church tithe taxes then levied on farmers (a cause that was taken up by Mosley's blackshirts who "protected" a number of East Anglian farms in the 1930s from the bailiffs authorised to extract payments to the Church). Jenks and Gardiner meanwhile have been posthumously cancelled by the Soil Association, their roles as the practical trailblazers, lead theorists and polemicists for organic farming expunged from the record.

Away from farming, Britain's Green fascists heartily promoted the physical and spiritual benefits of connecting with nature. Mosley found this focus all a bit wishy washy for his masculine brand of politics. Indeed, the primary reason why Rolf Gardiner began to distance himself from the BUF was due to his belief that Mosley failed to go far enough in emphasising rural social issues.

Gardiner's and Williamson's belief in the power of nature to heal mankind stemmed in part from their shared interest in the philosophy of Dr Rudolf Steiner. In particular they advocated the importance of exposing the young to wildlife and rural life, both in their education and free time. The spiritual outdoorsiness of the Steiner school model is advocated by the UK Green Party today, its sometime schools spokesperson, Samantha Pancheri, stating Steiner schools are "broadly compatible" with their own education policies that shun the formality and Ofsted-assessed rigidity preferred by mainstream parties.

WILLIAMSON'S CERTAINTY ABOUT THE benefits of being "in nature" were also inspired by a trip he took to Nuremberg in 1935 where he witnessed the Hitler Youth hiking. In *The Story of a Norfolk Farm* he notes "the former pallid leer of hopeless slum youth transformed into the suntan, the clear eye, the broad and easy rhythm of the poised young human being", as the uniformed youngsters trekked where they liked into a countryside made open access courtesy of the policies of Hermann Goering.

The ethos of Williamson and Gardiner of actively promoting nature as a necessary balancing force to modern life is echoed by the Right to Roam organisation who campaign to extend the Countryside & Rights of Way (CRoW) Act in England in order that, so they say, "millions more people can have easy access to open space, and the physical, mental and spiritual health benefits that it brings".

They go further, highlighting the "defining concept of nationhood" that the freedom to roam engenders. Right to Roam are no mere bit-part players; their supporters' 2020 letter putting their case to Boris Johnson was signed by one hundred leading figures within the modern environmental movement including Monbiot, the television presenter Chris Packham, and even Stephen Fry. Caroline Lucas, the Green Party MP for Brighton Pavilion, has had the second reading of her bill to amend the CRoW tabled in the Commons for October.

Shorn of the noxious anti-Semitism and racism, the influence of pre- and post-war British fascist thinkers — Jenks's pioneering regenerative farming; Gardiner's organicism and Williamson's blood and soil spiritual beliefs — on modern day environmentalism is obvious, however much Greens would, understandably, like to forget them.

It is a tragedy that the radical politicisation of environmentalism has led to the majority of those who occupy the political middle-ground recoiling from the real issues of biodiversity loss and climate change. It could be argued that until this green extremism disappears, the chances of us finding consensus on how we combat the evolving environmental crisis is, like Tarka, dead in the water. ●

"It's a Mick Lynch mob!"

Richard Negus, a former soldier, lays hedges in East Anglia

SOIL ASSOCIATION; CARTOON BY ROYSTON ROBERTSON

LIKE WOTAN RIDING THE STORM

Richard Bratby fulfils a boyhood dream on the footplate of a classic steam locomotive

BR 73156 hauling a passenger train southbound from Loughborough

PHILIP BIRKITT/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

IT'S A GREY MORNING IN THE EAST MIDLANDS, and I'm sitting inside 76 tons of heavily engineered steel. Drizzle falls on the platform of Loughborough Central station, and clouds of steam billow and drift like we're in a 1940s weepie. But that doesn't concern me right now, because I'm at the controls of steam locomotive No. 73156, squinting through rain-spattered glass at the bright red signal a hundred yards ahead and faintly terrified at what I'm about to do. Riding atop a huge mobile furnace filled with high-pressure steam does seem to concentrate the mind.

The signal jerks upwards. "OK, just a bit" comes the voice behind me, and I tug at a lever. There's a roar, the floor vibrates; a needle on a dial quivers. Gradually, deliberately, the world to each side starts to slide away. We're moving, and it's all my doing. I glance round at my supervisor for reassurance, and

notice that he seems amused: possibly because — it now dawns on me — I'm grinning like an idiot.

Do children still dream of being train drivers when they grow up? I did, and I sometimes wonder if I was one of the last. Steam locomotives vanished from the world — along with double-deck trams, palm court orchestras, devilled kidneys and all the other wonderful things that storybooks had promised would make adult life a treat — in the decade before I was born.

It took 40 years for me to get my hands on the controls of one but I'm here to tell you that it was worth the wait — and more importantly, that you can do it too. In fact, the people who rescue, restore and tend to these fabulous beasts are very keen that you should. Britain's 200-odd preserved railways realised a

few years back that there's money in dreams: and few dreams, even now, are more potent than that of driving a steam locomotive. For a price, you can enlist on a "Footplate Experience" course: a chance — under extremely close expert supervision — to do it for real.

AND IT DOESN'T GET MUCH MORE REAL than driving a loco like No. 73156. This wasn't my first time. I had done a taster course, before the pandemic, on the Severn Valley Railway in Worcestershire. On that occasion the loco had been a small saddle-tank engine, essentially a compact but charming piece of Victorian industrial machinery. This is very different: 73156 is a BR Standard Class 5; built in 1956 as part of the last generation of steam locomotives designed for the national network.

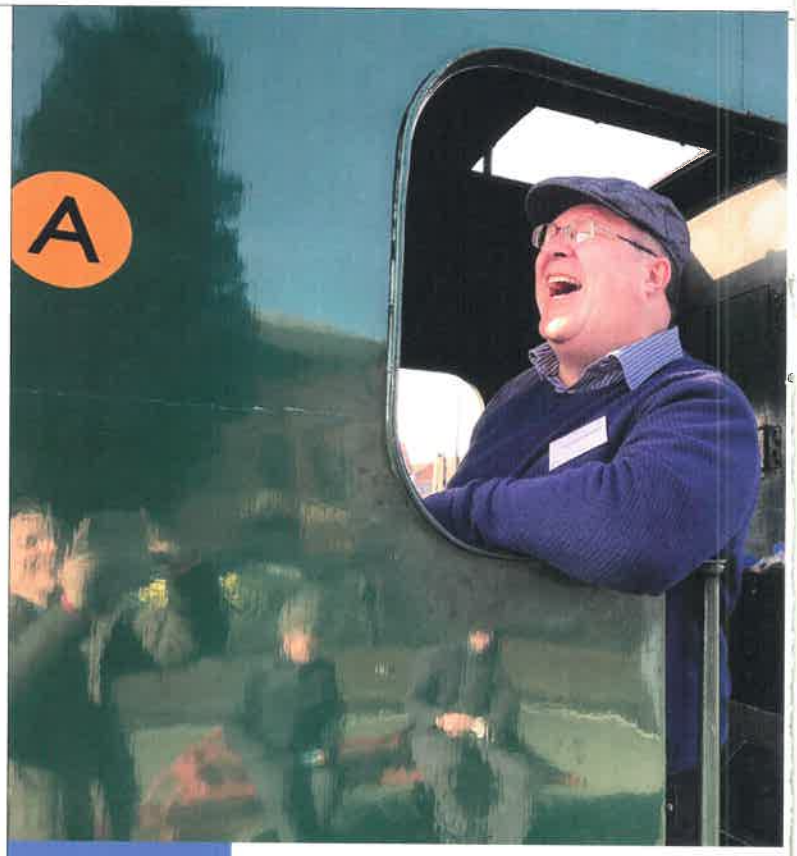
She's as close to state-of-the-art as a steam engine gets. She's built for power, for practicality, and for speed: one glance at those towering six-foot driving wheels tells you that she's a real high-stepping strutter.

Clinging on to the wet handrails, I heave myself up and into the cab, where the regular driver and fireman are waiting to introduce themselves. They're a cheerful pair — well, they would be; they've only got the best job in the world. I've been issued with a blue frock-coat, and this time, mercifully, I'm not under-dressed. On the taster course, the driver and fireman wore shirts and ties under their overalls: impeccably turned out to shovel coal in sauna-like heat.

It was a reminder that qualified locomotive crew aren't merely skilled technicians (although the theoretical and practical knowledge required to qualify as a fireman, let alone a driver, is encyclopedic). They're master-craftsmen in a profession that, a century ago, conferred its own dignity and prestige. Between the wars, when streamlined expresses competed to shatter speed records, elite loco drivers were minor celebrities, with stopwatch-carrying rail fans recording and comparing their achievements. The Great Western Railway issued a poster of a dapper City gent shaking hands with the driver of his morning train: "Splendid run! Thank you!"

WE WON'T BE BREAKING ANY records today, but the locomotive itself is enough to overwhelm the senses. The shifting, bucking floor beneath your feet (the cab is known as the footplate: like the coachmen they succeeded, early train drivers were not deemed to require protection from the weather), the smell of hot metal and burning coal (there's 3 tons of the black stuff, and about 4000 gallons of water, in the tender coupled directly behind the engine); the blast of heat from the firebox (the fire, generating temperatures in excess of 1000C, is crucial to the locomotive's performance) — you don't so much drive a steam engine, as harness the elemental forces that make it live.

The basic principle is simple enough: the fire converts water to steam (drivers of modern diesel and electric trains refer jokingly to steam locos as "kettles") and the steam is channelled, via a series of valves and mechanical contrivances, to turn the wheels. In a digital world, it's all magnificently analogue.



MRS BRATBY

Unclip the brake, lean forward, and with a wrist-wrenching tug, pull the regulator. God, it's happening

So the driver explains the controls, and there are only three real essentials. The regulator: the polished steel handle which unleashes the power of the steam and makes the engine go. The reverser — which determines which way it goes. And a brake: a chunkier version of the sort of thing you would get on a bicycle handlebar. That's basically it, though after a lifetime immersed in car culture, some first-timers are apparently flustered by the lack of a steering wheel.

I take the little bucket seat at the left of the cab, wind the reverser with a big metal wheel until it locks into position for "forward", and fix my gaze on the signal. It moves: we've got the road. Unclip the brake, lean forward, and with a wrist-wrenching tug, pull open the regulator. God, it's actually happening: this colossal machine is rolling forward at my behest, and gathering momentum at a pace that would be alarming if it didn't feel so organic.

WE'RE HEADING SOUTH ON THE Great Central Railway — the original HS1 that was opened in 1899 to link Marylebone to South Yorkshire before being ripped up in those accursed late 1960s, and later rebuilt by enthusiasts. "Unmitigated England"

was how John Betjeman described it, and the GCR currently runs to the northern outskirts of Leicester, which means we've got eight miles of superbly-engineered main line ahead of us. The big Class 5 is finding her stride. I lean out of the window, oblivious to the rain, and hear her settling into a steady beat.

The driver — the proper driver — leans over and points out a "Whistle" sign. On any railway, instructions are to be followed to the letter: when you're in charge of 100 tons of fast-moving machinery, you are never, ever, just playing trains. A tug on a chain, and 73156 gives a shriek. Only the one; there are lineside residents to consider and I've been warned not to overdo it: "This isn't Thomas the Tank Engine." Well, no. But how many children developed an enduring love of these extraordinary machines while reading the Revd Awdry's little books?

Awdry first conceived his stories while living near the Great Western main line, listening by night to goods trains struggling up the hill out of Bath: "There was no doubt in my mind that steam engines all had definite personalities. I would hear in the puffings and pantings of the two engines the conversation they were having with one another."

He'd hit on something. Even without a face on the front, a steam locomotive is not like other human creations. It breathes. It's warm. Even when built, like 73156, to a standard design, no two are ever the same. In the words of Awdry's friend, the Revd Teddy Boston (train-mad Anglican clergymen are another vanished breed), "The steam engine is the nearest thing to a living being made by man." I'll buy that. In my garden I like to mess about with model steam trains. They burn camping gas and driving them is like walking a baby dragon on a leash.

How much more so with the massive, fire-breathing real thing? Rainclouds graze the hills of the Charnwood Forest as we accelerate through soggy Leicestershire fields, but dogwalkers in anoraks and mums in back-gardens look up and wave as we pass. Steam locomotives are charismatic fauna: humans are drawn to them. Harry Potter didn't travel to Hogwarts by Pendolino, after all.

MEANWHILE, WE'VE SLOWED DOWN — a bridge is under repair — but now the speed restriction is past. "You can open up" says the driver, and I give the regulator another heave. Immediately, 73156 begins to bark. Steam billows from the chimney and whirls away over the countryside as she digs in, with a throaty, basso-profundo shout that goes straight to the bones.

Can any music match the exhilaration of that glorious sound? Beethoven's Seventh, perhaps, or Sibelius in full flow. I still haven't stopped smiling.

Accelerating through the Quorn country with rain lashing in through the window and the speedometer needle wobbling around 25mph (the maximum permitted speed on most UK private railways) it feels like this is what humans were born to do. Faster than fairies, faster than witches: I never understood friends who got excited over BMWs and all those other petrol-powered Clarksonesque boys' toys. Hit the ton on the M40 and you're still just a worm in a tin box. 25mph on the footplate of a Class 5 and you're Wotan riding the storm. If this is a midlife crisis, sign me up for more.

There is another signal ahead. Time to push back the regulator, to watch the speedometer fall and, with a careful application of the brake, to bring her to a halt in the platform at Rothley station. We've another three miles to Leicester North; then a brief rest and the run back to Loughborough, where a fried breakfast awaits.

We'll be running in reverse, so at speed the rain will be sluicing straight over the coal and into the cab. Driver and fireman are both laughing at the prospect. Who cares about a spot of drizzle when you're holding the reins of an iron dragon? The driver reaches for an enamel flask of tea, kept (as tradition dictates) on a shelf above the firebox door, and the fireman shovels coal, rebuilding the fire for the journey back. Heat floods the cab. Though, as I've learned by now, when you're working with a steam locomotive it's not just the fire that makes you glow. ●

Richard Bratby is is a classical music writer, critic and consultant

EVERYDAY LIES WITH THEODORE DALRYMPLE

To expect truth to emerge from the mouth of a politician is, I suppose, like expecting milk from a sea urchin or peaches from a stinging nettle. Therefore, when **JEAN-LUC MÉLENCHON**, as persistent in seeking election in France as was the late, lamented **SCREAMING LORD SUTCH** in Britain, said he was not claiming he would create paradise from one day to the next but he would put an end to hell, he was speaking with forked tongue at the least.

In the first place, his assertion that he would not create paradise from one day to the next suggested that such a paradise was attainable, given time and given people such as he to direct its attainment.

But if paradise were not immediately reachable, he stated that he would release people from the hell in which they were now living.

It is true that there is much dissatisfaction in France – as there is in most places in the world. It is also certainly true that many people there have difficult lives, especially those who live in big cities on small wages. I should not care to change places with them.

But hell? Surely this is going a little far? At the other end of Europe, after all, whole cities were being reduced to rubble even as Monsieur Mélenchon spoke. Upwards of 10 per cent of Ukraine's population had fled. And I need not enumerate all the other various contemporary hells that exist, including the chronic hell of North Korea.

Does Mélenchon's ridiculous use of a superlative epithet matter? I think that it does. When people are convinced that nothing worse can exist than that which they already experience, they do not stop to consider even the possibility that a policy advocated to release them from their "hell" might actually make things worse for them. The road to hell is paved with exaggeration. ●

LINCOLN ALLISON recalls Alpine "reading parties" with the *Chaletites*, Oxford University's most exclusive secret society

High times with high minds

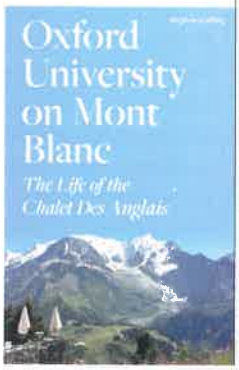
SOME TIME IN THE SPRING OF 1966 the dean of University College, Oxford sidled up to me in the quadrangle and began to mutter. He was called Tony Firth and he had a very distinctive and widely imitated style: a slight figure, head on one side, given to muttering and much use of the double negative. He appeared to be addressing me on the subject of Alpine weather, chuckling that "it's not impossible that the cloud can descend for three days and then you'll jolly well have to read a book".

I'm not sure when I worked out what this conversation was about, but I eventually understood that I was being offered membership of an exclusive club, the *Chaletites*. Ever since 1891 Oxford undergraduates as well as fellows and graduated members of its colleges had been invited to form "reading parties" in a chalet high on the slopes of *Mont Blanc*.

Among Tory *chaletites*, Harold Macmillan and Quintin Hogg both said the happiest times of their lives were up at the chalet, while on the Labour side there have been several generations of Jays, and Dennis Healey is said to be the only person who ever turned up to the chalet in *lederhosen*. There are references to the place, some entirely explicit and some more coded, in many works ranging in prominence from *Brideshead Revisited* to private publications. When Firth approached me I did not know of the chalet's existence.

THE STORY STARTS WITH DAVID URQUHART, who was born in 1805 and was eccentric even by the standards of the Scottish gentry. He was obsessed with Ottoman politics and introduced Turkish baths to Britain. But he also firmly believed in the physical and mental advantages of living at altitude.

In 1865 he had a chalet built on Le Prarion above St. Gervais-les-Bains on the Mont Blanc massif. It was a little lower than the 6,000 feet above sea level he claimed for it and served as a family summer home until his son, Francis, inherited it. Urquhart was a bachelor fellow in the old style of Balliol College and he began taking college parties to the chalet in 1891; he was universally known by his nickname, "Sligger". ("Reading parties" for undergraduates were already an established practice in coastal and hill regions of the UK.)



CHALET LIFE BROKE NEARLY ALL THE RULES OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS; IT WAS MALE, WHITE, ELITIST AND SELECTED BY UNABASHED FAVOURITISM

Sligger continued to take parties until 1934 (except for an Edwardian lacuna when the chalet burned down and was rebuilt on a larger scale; and there were no parties during the First World War). His privately-printed book of reading party etiquette, *The Perfect Chaletite*, does contain a specific injunction that the eponymous model character will not burn the place down. And such parties have continued up to the present day with the notable exception of the period 1938-52.

There is now an historical account of the chalet written by Stephen Golding, a medic and fellow of University College who has led reading parties in the late twentieth century and into the twenty first. (*Oxford University on Mont Blanc: the Life of the Chalet des Anglais*, Profile Books). Incidentally, the official name of the chalet was, possibly in some sense still is, the *Chalet des Mélèzes* (larches), but *des Anglais* became so widely used that it now appears on French maps.

WHEREAS MANY PEOPLE HAVE GOT THEMSELVES in trouble in the Alps because of bad weather, I nearly died because of good weather. It was so warm in the summer of 1967 that snow and ice melted back to unprecedented degrees, releasing rock falls. I was hit by a rock on a steep slope called the Grand Couloir (by no means as colourful as it sounds). Fortunately it hit me on the thigh and I suffered only bruising and shock, though there was a very brief interlude when I thought I was a goner; six people were killed by rock falls that weekend on the massif.

Anyone who reads a book about something they have experienced is likely to realise both that there was a lot they didn't know and that some of what they did believe was myth. I always thought of it as the "Univ chalet", for instance, even though I knew that New College parties also went. In fact, in my time, it was owned by one Roger Mynors. He had been left it in Sligger's will and historically it was really the Balliol chalet. Given the legal expertise available, it is now in the care of a not-for-profit French company which in turn is owned by the three colleges as minority shareholders.

One thing that never appears to have been a problem is relations

PROFILE BOOKS

Above left: the chalet; above right: Mont Blanc; left: at front, Tony Firth (1952, History) as one of the boys at Col de Tricot

with local people; there has always been a welcoming spirit both from neighbouring chalets and the nearby Prarion hotel (called the Pavillon by New College, apparently, in a typical piece of eccentricity). Attitudes back in Oxford have been less sympathetic as the institution has been attacked by student journalists in both *Cherwell* and *Isis* as elitist (yes, Oxford undergraduates dishing out accusations of elitism) and by fellows of New College worried by health and safety issues. The occasional invited *chaletite* has expressed distaste for either the primitive conditions or the claustrophobic atmosphere.

Golding is right to raise the issue of homosexuality, or perhaps homoeroticism. Sligger was notorious for picking good-looking young men, *"les beaux jeunes hommes de M. Urquhart"* as they were known locally, though the regular visits of Quintin Hogg (Viscount Hailsham) and Cyril Connolly would seem to contradict that. There is a picture of Harold Macmillan casually resting his head on Sligger's thigh and the correspondence of Edwardian *chaletites* is indicative of intense relationships and forms of love.

HAVING SAID THAT, THE PARTIES I WAS IN, though all male, were pure and hearty to a degree that would have pleased Lord Baden-Powell. This was despite our knowledge that Firth himself was "not interested in girls" (as my mother would have put it) and the fact that the Oxford of our time was rife with what would now be regarded as forms of sexual harassment: I could have shopped several fellows and three college heads by today's standards.

But the real problem of the chalet was always going to be the combination of maintenance and finance. A wooden building, high up in the woods, unoccupied for over forty weeks a year, is going to be hit by weather, rot, mice, rats, thieves, and squatters. And it has been. There are persistent rumours that both resistance and SOE used it in the war, but Golding insists these are unsubstantiated and probably false. In my time even essential maintenance was made almost impossible by the currency restrictions imposed by Harold Wilson's government. The obvious solution lies in the wealth and success of *Chaletites* and things would appear to be much better now.

I certainly enjoyed it. It was a natural part of my summer which involved setting off across the Channel with only the vaguest of plans and seven pounds of luggage. I slept in gardens, ditches and (for preference) hay barns. By my standards the chalet was quite luxurious — a bed to put the sleeping bag on! I was also a natural for the hearty, all-male environment: even as a teenager I was a veteran of army camps in the CCF, OTC and geographical expeditions. In later life I was to go on more than two dozen cricket tours. The passage I always remember in *Anna Karenina* is where Vronsky, alone at last with Anna, begins to miss his regiment; I knew how he felt.

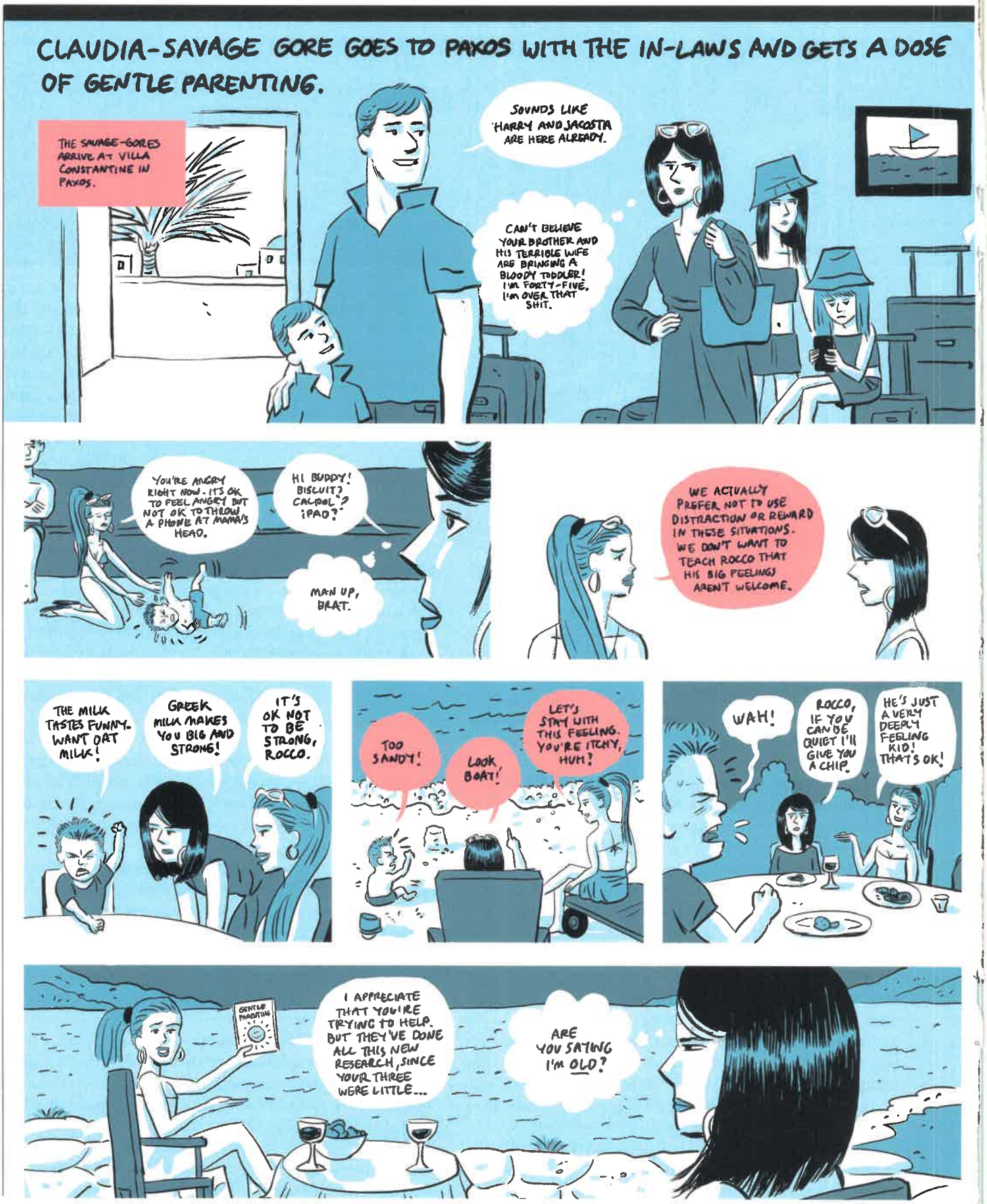
YOU COULD SAY THAT CHALET LIFE as I knew it broke nearly all the rules of twenty-first century correctness: it was all male, all white, indisputably elitist and selected by unabashed favoritism. (All three colleges now use a procedure which allows students to apply to go.)

"Reading party" was a euphemism in our case; I never read a book, but we were very lucky with the weather. At the other extreme, Sir Anthony Kenny's Balliol parties (1970-95) had classes, set texts and so on. But I did learn a lot: Firth's "adult" guests included priests, lawyers and civil servants as well as academics. I learned a great deal talking to them.

You could also argue the chalet was university life at its very best, a real intellectual community of teachers, students and alumni, learning from each other and enjoying each other's company. There was much laughter and jollity, and the landscape was beautiful. It was a world far removed from what contemporary universities are becoming — hierarchical "provider" bureaucracies servicing customers and bound by strict ideological tenets. I think I acquired something of Sligger by cultural transfer. Else why would I have organised over a hundred student field trips instead of "getting on with my research"? ●

BENJAMINHALLPHOTO.COM

CLAUDIA-SAVAGE GORE GOES TO PAXOS WITH THE IN-LAWS AND GETS A DOSE OF GENTLE PARENTING.



JAMIE COE/ILLUSTRATIONX

THE NEXT DAY, JACOSTA GOES TO THE SPA LEAVING HARRY IN CHARGE...
MATE, IF YOU STOP SCREAMING YOU CAN HAVE AN ICE CREAM.
GOTCHA!
CLAUDIA WHATAPPS JACOSTA AN UPDATE.
ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT! SO CUTE! ♡
IT'S JUST AN ICE CREAM! IT WAS THE ONLY WAY TO STOP HIM CRYING.
WERE YOU NOT ALLOWED TO CRY AS A CHILD? OR WAS ICE CREAM FRAMED AS A 'TREAT'? I REALLY FEEL LIKE YOU NEED TO RE-PARENT YOURSELF, HARRY.
SWEETIE, I KNOW YOU HEARD DADDY YELLING. THAT WAS PROBABLY HARD FOR YOU. HE'S HAVING TROUBLE HANDLING HIS FEELINGS.
CAN I HAVE MORE ICE CREAM?
NEXT DAY: JACOSTA AND ROCCO HAVE MOVED TO A HOTEL, HARRY HAS FLOWN HOME. THE SAVAGE-GORES HAVE VILLA CONSTANTINE TO THEMSELVES.
NA-MA-FUCKING-STE!
I'VE GOT A MOSQUITO BITE. IT HURRRRTS
OH FOR GOD'S SAKE STOP WHINING HECTOR. YOU'RE IN A BEAUTIFUL PLACE—
MUMMY. I'VE NOTICED THAT YOU FIND IT VERY TRIGGERING WHEN HECTOR COMPLAINS ABOUT ANYTHING. DID GRANNY NOT LET YOU HAVE BIG FEELINGS?
FML.

Lisa Hilton says that today's Season may be more democratic and international than the old, but those in the know still cherish the hot tickets that guarantee exclusivity

A very superior Season

"WOMEN THESE DAYS have better things to do than bow to a cake." Thus said Peter Townend, former social editor of *Tatler* and gatekeeper of the vestigial debutante scene, before his death in 2002. Despite Townend's *apres moi le deluge* predictions, the London Season has not only endured but apparently flourished, particularly after two years of lockdown restrictions. More expansive, international and inclusive, the modern Season now extends far beyond its traditional sporting-based fixtures, including anything from Glastonbury to Art Basel. Extravagant hats, unwashed Henley blazers and buckets of lukewarm Pimms have been supplemented, if not superseded, by architecture installations and superstar DJ sets. Yet might it have lost a little polish in the process?

The concept of the "Season" began to coalesce around the Restoration court in the seventeenth century, essentially coinciding with the presence of the Royal Family in London and the sitting of Parliament, though its rituals were not formalized until 1780 with the first ball in honour of Queen Charlotte's birthday, when "coming out" meant a woman's official presentation to society.

The codes and rules of the Season were essentially an upper-class mating ritual, ostensibly guaranteeing a girl's pedigree on her launch onto the marriage market. By the nineteenth century the calendar was rigidly established from April to August, running from the private view of the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition through to Cowes Week, after which the toffs could hightail it back to the Highlands for the Glorious Twelfth.

The codes and rules of the Season were essentially an upper-class mating ritual, ostensibly guaranteeing a girl's pedigree in the marriage market

By the Edwardian era, Seasonal events had swelled to a positively exhausting timetable including the Boat Race and the Berkeley Dress Show, the Royal Windsor Horse Show, the Queen's Cup, Glyndebourne, the Badminton Horse Trials, Chelsea Flower Show, the Derby, Royal Ascot, the 4th of June, Commem Balls at Oxford and May Balls at Cambridge, the Henley Regatta, Wimbledon and Newmarket.

IF ALL THAT WASN'T enough, the real business of the Season was contracted at coming-out balls and Saturday-to-Monday parties in country houses. Upper-class mothers took their tiaras out of the bank and resigned themselves to the peculiar martyrdom of women of their class — chaperonage. While the matrons nodded on hired gold chairs, the gels learned to kick out their white satin trains, attended luncheons and cocktail dances, drank fruit cup and sat out to eat ices, year after year, until the Queen attempted to put a stop to the whole daft business in 1958.

It was all supposed to be tremendous fun, of course, though Deborah, the late Duchess of Devonshire, recalled her own deb season as less than dazzling:

"Rather a small square room to dance in and too many people in the doorway and on the stairs ...

The chinless horror: I think this is our dance

Me: Oh yes, I think it is.

CH: What a crowd in the doorway.

Me: Yes, isn't it awful?

The CH clutches me round the waist and I almost fall over as I try to put my feet where his aren't.

Me: Sorry.

CH: No, my fault.

Me: Oh, I think it must have been me.

CH: Oh no, that wouldn't be possible.

Then follows a long and dreary silence sometimes one of us saying 'sorry' and the other 'my fault.' After a bit we feel we can't bear it any longer so we decide to go and sit down."

Perhaps it's lovely that all the nonsense has now been dispensed with and the season is just about enjoying oneself, but how do the new fixtures on Society's calendar measure up to the traditional hats-and-horses affairs?

MUSIC FESTIVALS are major newcomers to the season scene. That well-known bible of edginess the *Telegraph* lists 33 events between May and September this year, from the positively

RICKY VIGIL M/GC IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES; GAIGER/TOPICAL PRESS AGENCY/GETTY IMAGES

Natasha Poonawalla attending The Serpentine Gallery Summer Party on June 30, 2022

veteran Isle of Wight to chilled family-friendly Wilderness and twee little Latitude in Suffolk, which "promises to be filled with artisan street food ... and Instagram opportunities". That pretty much says it all. Even if you don't believe that the season went to the dogs when the Royal Enclosure at Ascot started admitting divorcees in 1955, you have to concede that music festivals are for typicals (if you don't know the term you probably are one).

There are so many, many reasons not to be caught dead at one, unless you're under 25 and high. Superannuated stars forced back on the road by Spotify. Yurts. Fairy lights in yurts. Being stuck in the queue for the cesspit next to the ageing crusty who needs to tell you how it's all gone downhill since they started building turnkey camps in Black Rock City. And they go on for days. As far back as 1863, *The Era*'s introduction to the Season remarked on "a recent affliction of concerts of an awful length" and the sets haven't got shorter. Please, please, leave the festivals to the kids. It's kinder to everybody.

THE SERPENTINE SUMMER PARTY. The nearest London gets to the fashion meets "philanthropy" ghastliness of the New York Met Gala. Essentially an opportunity for the children of people who were famous in the Nineties to get content for their Insta feeds. (No seasonal event is now complete without a selection of Insta-friendly backdrops where the unknowing villeins of surveillance capitalism can pay their tithes. Parties now start half an hour early so that influencers can "get pictures" before actually attending.) But you might get to glimpse a celebrity hairdresser, or Anna Wintour. Next.

Which brings us to art fairs. In the past, the equine-centric focus of many Seasonal events required newcomers to distinguish between a forehead and a fetlock, but art fairs have obviated the necessity for any pretence to knowledge of pretty much anything. All you need to join the caravanserai of contemporary art socialising that carries on through the Venice Biennale in spring through to London's Frieze in autumn is money.

Discernment, knowledge and skill are required of neither conceptual art maker nor conceptual art buyer, the parties are really snazzy and your wife can wear her Louboutins without being mortified by having to tread in the divots. Art is the new cultural capital for those who haven't got any and if you're prepared to spend big you can do a year-long circuit without having to come within a Maurizio Cattelan sculpture's length of a polo mallet.

ART ALSO PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY to hop in at one or more of the other new Seasonal staples, **ISLANDS**. From Mykonos to Lipari there's now a contemporary art space next to practically any port deep enough for a 100 metre Mariotti.

The more obvious bits of the Med are still going strong, but Menorca is cooler than Ibiza thanks to Hauser and Wirth, whilst the hottest ticket in the Aegean is the Slaughterhouse Deste party on Hydra in June.

The opening night crowd for an exibition at the Deste Foundation on Hydra; the Royal Enclosure at Ascot

Do **LITERARY FESTIVALS** count as part of the Season? Possibly Hay in early summer, but Cliveden and Cheltenham fall just outside the calendar. Cliveden attracts the smartest writers in every sense of the word, but it's probably too brainy to count, which latter is the conundrum of the modern season.

Unless it's Glyndebourne, which has aristocratic chops, gatherings which are culturally enriching are nonetheless missing an essential element for Seasonal inclusion, which is snobbery.

"THE SEASON DOESN'T HAVE A FUTURE" opined Melissa Knatchbull of *Harpers & Queen* at the beginning of the twentieth century. Perhaps she meant that the Trad season was melding too indiscriminately with the New, that a phenomenon which had been perceived as quintessentially English had become too cosmopolitan, too international; county girls in unflattering taffeta ballgowns being ousted by corporate-sponsored Euroglam? Or maybe she was referring to boundaries, without which neither Season can properly exist and which, on the evidence of the crowds at Henley and Ascot, is nonetheless thriving?

People think of **FOMO** as a contemporary phenomenon, but in terms of the Season it's been around since the first batch of ostrich-plumed debs queued in their carriages along the Mall. The whole point of the Season is the original velvet rope, the VIP area which admits Us but not Them. It might stem from the uniquely British drive to inject class into everything, but exclusivity and differentiation are what transform a picnic in a car park into the invitation of the year.

Feeling that you're the right person in the right place doesn't work unless someone else isn't. If you're not actually into polo or eventing or racing, much of the pleasure of the season derives from being on the "right" side of the paddock, of being au fait with the arcane vocabulary and regulations that insidiously separate PLU from People Like You. Why else the love of dress codes, the annual *Daily Mail* slaver over regatta stewards measuring skirt lengths? Why the continued proliferation of guides for awkward latter-day Prufrocks which peddle the kind of knowledge that only counts if you've never had to learn it?

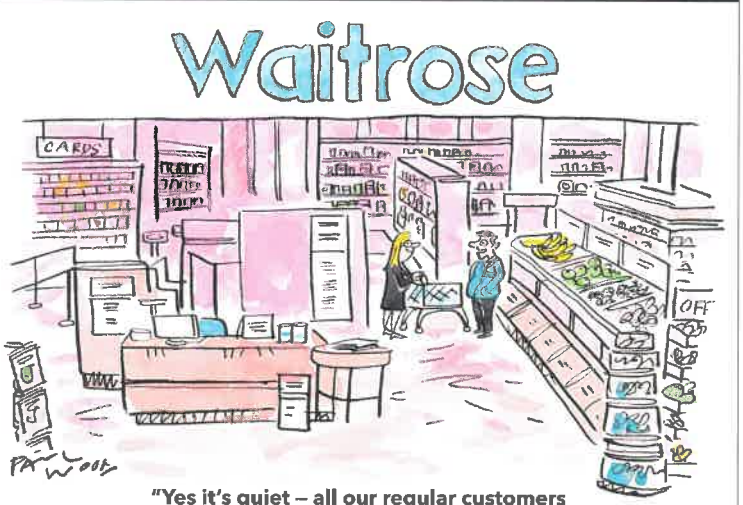
ALLODOXIA IS THE TERM GIVEN TO the phenomenon of experiencing heterodoxy as if it were orthodoxy, the undifferentiated reverence which mistakes the imitation for the genuine article. Distinguishing between a Seasonal event as opposed to simply having a jolly time in sunny weather provides an essential satisfaction beyond the pleasure (or not, see music festivals above) derived from the event itself. And here the New Season falls short.

It may be exclusive from a financial perspective, but it lacks a crucial element of angst. Dressing-up lists, badges, regulations reinforce the divide between those in the know and those who think they are, and in that sense Mr Townend was dead wrong.

Anyone can attend a festival or an art fair but only those who know, however amorphous that group may have become, care that the White's tent is the smartest place to be seen in the Royal Enclosure.

Whether it's the Queen's Cup or the Badminton Horse Trials, the trussed-up Trad Season still possesses something the New Season doesn't. That is, the capacity to make the excluded feel inferior. ●

Lisa Hilton is *The Critic*'s restaurant critic



"Yes it's quiet – all our regular customers have glued themselves to the M1."

CARTOON BY PAUL WOOD

In search of the lost "Greek" tribe of Alexander the Great

Paul Raffaele treks through the Hindu Kush to seek out the ancient Kalash people, who claim descent from Alexander's army

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SEVEN years ago, a mysterious Afghan pagan tribe, the Kalash, fled Islamic religious persecution to three secretive valleys in a remote corner of what is now north-western Pakistan. In 1998, when I was visiting Lahore, a Pakistani friend told me that little was known about the Kalash, except that they still lived largely as their people had back in their homeland for more than 2,000 years.

The Kalash, rarely visited by outsiders, claimed descent from Alexander the Great's troops who had campaigned through their Hindu Kush homeland. In their refuge, they were said to still practice a similar culture and religion to that of ancient Greece, even worshipping Zeus as their paramount god.

In 330BC, Alexander established many cities across what is now Afghanistan — with thousands of his soldiers left to inhabit them, keep order, with his generals to rule them. More than 10,000 of his troops married local women and stayed behind. He gave the cities Greek culture with artists, musicians, architects and artisans. They built outdoor theatres and gymnasiums, and erected countless marble statues of Greek gods.

Nudging the remote north-eastern edge of Afghanistan, the mountain town of Chitral, the provincial capital, was ruled by the ul-Mulk royal family until 1947, when it was swallowed by Pakistan. At breakfast the morning after I arrived in search of the Kalash, Prince Siraj, the grandson of Chitral's last king, told me that near the turn of the nineteenth century, the entire Kalash tribe of about 50,000 spread across the high mountains of Afghanistan's Hindu Kush bordering Chitral.

Scorned by Afghan Muslims as kafirs, their homeland was a secluded, mysterious place called Kafiristan, or Land of the Unbelievers.

A Kalash girl in brightly-coloured homespun dress

That was where Rudyard Kipling set his epic story, "The Man Who Would Be King", first published in 1888 in Kipling's collection of short stories, *The Phantom Rickshaw and other Eerie Tales*. It was later made into a fanciful but entertaining film. Two rogue British soldiers, played by Michael Caine and Sean Connery, travelled to Kafiristan, where the Connery character is mistaken for a god.

So little was known of the ethnic group in 1888 that the Bombay-born Kipling based his story on vague rumour and his fertile imagination. The movie plunged even further from the truth with John Huston, the director, depicting the Kafirs, or Kalash, as resembling shaven-headed, ancient Egyptian priests clad in white robes.

TOWARDS THE NINETEENTH CENTURY'S END, the Sultan of Kabul, Abdur Rahman, brutally put down 40 rebellions during his 21-year reign. Following the gruesome example of the invading Mongols five centuries earlier, he built towers formed from the heads of thousands of defeated rebels who dared challenge him.

In 1895, he turned his attention to the Kalash. He decided their presence in his domain, with their free-wheeling, timeless lifestyle — a religion with multiple carved gods, rampant wine drinking, especially at their bacchanalian religious festivals, and exuberant fornication, even sanctioned adultery — was an abomination, a flagrant public insult to Islam, and thus to himself.

"The Sultan ordered all the Kalash to convert to Islam immediately," Prince Siraj told me, "if not, he would declare a jihad against the Kafirs, and his troops would slaughter, by beheading, all those who resisted — men, women and even their children."

Invading Kafiristan, he renamed it Nuristan, Land of the Enlightened, and offered the Kalash a simple choice: convert to Islam immediately or die by the sword. Almost all converted. Those who resisted and were captured, were slaughtered.

Siraj alerted me to an account of the massacre in mountain climber Eric Newby's classic book *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush*. The prince had the well-thumbed book in his small library.

PAUL RAFFAELE

In 1956, Newby met many Nuristanis while climbing mountains in their territory. He spent several weeks in Nuristan and encountered many of their villages. He wrote that it was "like being back in the Middle Ages". Newby described how just one clan stood their ground when confronted by the Sultan's troops and refused to convert. "The Kafirs suffered heavy losses from artillery fire, many hundreds dying in the flames when they put their own villages to the torch."

The last bands of Kalash, 3,000 men, women and children, with their ancient culture entirely intact, survived because they fled across the border to the three isolated valleys in Chitral, a dozen miles from Afghanistan in royal ul-Mulk territory. "It takes a few hours from here driving over a rough mountain track to reach them," Siraj told me. "It's their remoteness that helps keep pure and strong their ancient Afghan ways. I admire them for that."

AFTER BREAKFAST, SIRAJ TOOK ME TO A WAITING JEEP. The driver, Jandool, was in his mid-twenties, slim, wiry and with a cocky look that complemented the rakish tilt of his fawn coloured Chitrali beret, the same headgear as the Afghan pakol.

Our Jeep kept pace with the muddy Chitral River for about an hour, and then we crossed a bridge and drove in the direction of nearby Afghanistan, ascending a mountain track more suited to alpine goats. As Jandool edged the Jeep around canyons and up steep gorges strewn with boulders, the track just a few feet wider than the Jeep, I kept my eyes averted from the dizzying drops and trusted in God and my lion-hearted driver.

"This is Bumboret," Jandool said as we reached the first Kalash village, four hours later. It was almost hidden in a cleave cut by a glacial river between two steep mountains of the Hindu Kush lined with dense stands of cedar, holly oak and fruit trees. The entrance was marked by a pole stuck in the ground and bearing a sign painted in green in Urdu, Pakistan's lingua franca, and in Arabic.

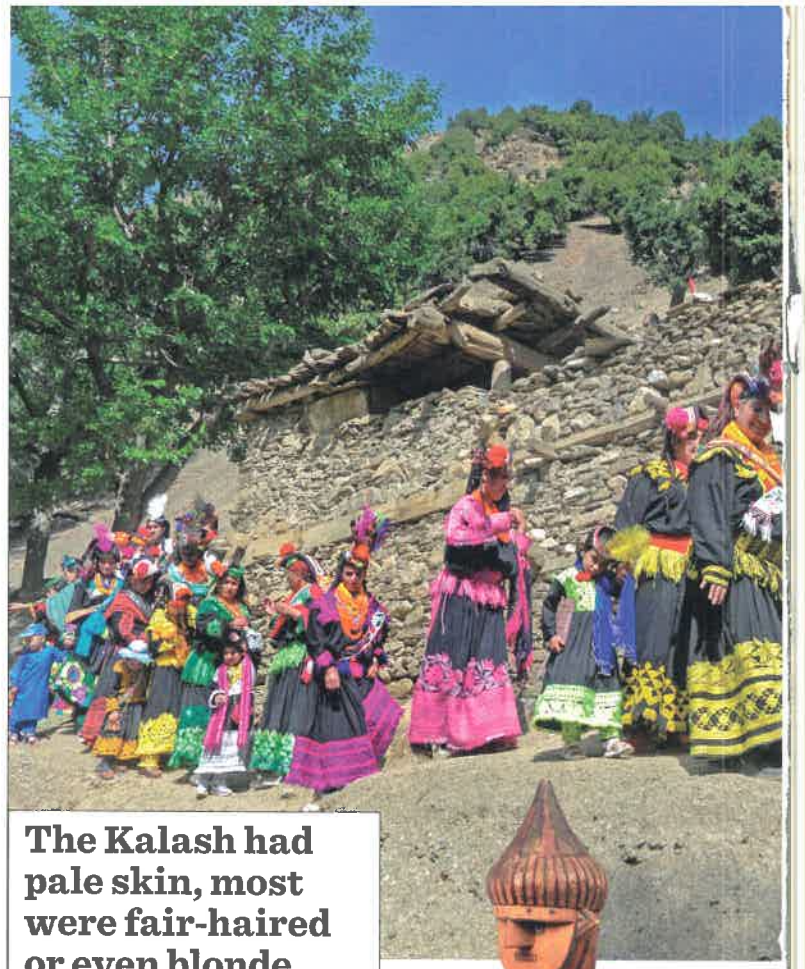
"The Saudi missionaries put it up," Jandool replied to my inquiry, "The sign says that it's Allah's will that the Kalash will be converted to Islam. They're now in this valley attempting to convert the Kalash to their Sunni version of Islam."

The valley teemed with orchards and vineyards, among them apricot, pear, mulberry and apple trees. The Kalash made wine for their own use from the mulberries. A rabble of long-haired goats scurried out of our way, herded by a fair-haired girl carrying a set of pan pipes. On the way, Jandool had taught me Kalash greetings. "Ishpadta baba," ("hello sister") I called out. She smiled shyly. 'Ishpadta baya,' she returned ("hello brother").

The primeval homes of the Kalash village nearby were embedded in the mountainside, and were made of mud, logs and hundreds of flat rocks stacked carefully in tight layers. The homes were piled one on top of the other up the slope. Your neighbour's verandah also served as your roof.

Women sat outside in the morning sun spinning goat wool and cuddling babies. Other women washed clothes in an icy glacial stream, and little girls skipped down a mountain path wearing in their hair golden flowers picked from the slopes.

The women's everyday traditional costume, worn from infanthood to old age, was one of the most spectacular I had ever encountered. Their homespun black robes were colourfully embroidered, and their heavy *shu'shut* headdresses hung down their backs like a horse's mane. Woven into them in intricate patterns were scores of cowrie shells, different coloured beads and tiny bells. From their necks dangled a dozen strands of brightly coloured beads. Many of the women and children had small, inky starbursts tattooed on their faces.

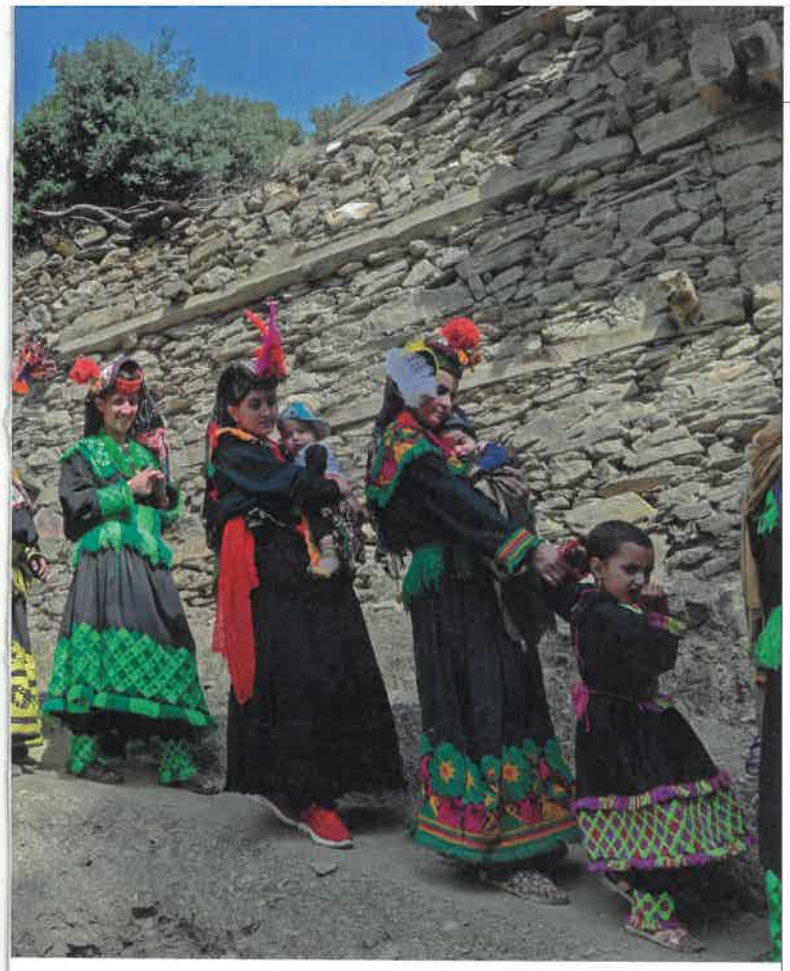


The Kalash had pale skin, most were fair-haired or even blonde with blue, green or grey eyes

Kalash women in traditional dress take part in the *Chilam Joshi* festival celebrating the arrival of spring at Bumburet village, 2022. Right: a *gandau* funerary figure of a male riding a horse, carved from a single piece of Himalayan cedar

ABDUL MAJEED/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES; © THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

THE KALASH WOMEN DID NOT WEAR VEILS, and their European appearance was startling. In contrast to most Pakistanis, who tended to be swarthy, the Kalash had pale skin. Most were fair-haired, there were even blondes and the occasional redhead, and they had aquiline noses and blue, green or grey eyes outlined with black powder from ground-up goats' horns. Most of the women stared defiantly at me or turned away, ignoring my hello in their language.



Alerted by Siraj, I was looking for Athanasios Lerounis, a Greek mountaineer, and spied him sitting outside in the sun. He told me he had stumbled on the Kalash five years earlier when he was climbing near here. He was stunned by their affinity with ancient Greeks, but was sceptical at first when they told him they were descended from Alexander's troops and regarded him as a blood brother:

> After spending several days with the Kalash, I was convinced they spoke the truth. There is so much similarity, not only in the way they look. They sacrifice goats at outdoor altars like the ancient Greeks, and worship the same sky gods, such as the goddess of the hearth, Jestar. We Greeks call her Estai. Di Zau is their king of the gods. We call him Te Zeus.

Lerounis was not the first outsider the Kalash told about their origin. The British historian Michael Wood wrote, "Here in Victorian days, ragged chieftains produced Hellenistic bowls for British administrators which they claimed had been given to them by Greek kings and proved their right to rule: such stories their ancestors had told to Marco Polo."

That contention, oft repeated in these parts, is disputed but has also received scientific support. The Pakistani geneticist, Qasim Mehdi, working with researchers at the Stanford University School of Medicine on a world genetic map, found that the Kalash, unlike other Pakistani peoples, shared DNA markers with those of Germans and Italians. "The finding tended to support descent from Alexander's troops," Qasim told me by phone, "because Alexander welcomed troops, mercenaries, from other parts of Europe into his army."

TWO DECADES AFTER MY FIRST VISIT in 1998, I returned to find the security situation in the three valleys had plummeted. Just across the border in Afghanistan, Taliban militia had murdered more than a hundred Nuristanis — Kalash whose ancestors converted to Islam in the late nineteenth century. The Taliban claimed they were faking their devotion to Islam and reverting to age-old Kalash customs such as drinking mulberry wine, dancing, singing and loose sex.

Taliban militia armed with assault rifles were even seen prowling the mountains near the Kalash's three valleys. In 2009, five masked Taliban attacked the compound where Lerounis lived. They shot dead a policeman on guard and kidnapped the Greek. The Taliban demanded a US$2 million ransom, and the release from a Pakistan jail of three imprisoned Taliban commanders in exchange for Lerounis's release. The Taliban held him captive for eight months, and then let him return to the Kalash. Lerounis has raised $4 million in aid, mostly from the Greek government, to build schools and clinics for the Kalash.

It got worse. In 2014, the Taliban posted on their website a one-hour anti-Kalash video which opened with film of their scenic valleys in Chitral, and then announced that it was going to conduct, "an armed holy struggle against the Kalash". *Dawn*, a respected Pakistani newspaper, reported that the Taliban declared, "We want to make it clear that the Kalash will be eliminated if they don't embrace Islam."

The Pakistan military high command responded by sending the elite Chitral Scouts, a highly trained army unit, to patrol and protect Kalash territory and the border with Afghanistan. But, in 2022, few Kalash venture from their villages after dark.

On my first visit in 1998, an hour's drive deeper into the valleys of the lost tribe of Alexander, and thus much closer to the Afghanistan border, brought me to the village of Rumbur. It spread along a narrow valley where layers of mud huts ascended a steep hill like an ancient tribal skyscraper. Three fair-headed girls aged about ten squatted by a stream washing dark robes by pounding them on rocks.

IN THE OPEN SQUARE BY THE HOUSES, villagers gathered around a Kalash holy man, Kasi Khushnawaz. He was also the tribe's storyteller. The Kalash were subsistence farmers, too poor to have TVs or radios, and, anyway, there was no electricity in the three villages then. So, Kasi drew a throng of children, men and women who squatted in the dust to listen as he retold ancient tales. He was a small, slender old man with twinkling eyes. "Sikander e Aazem (Alexander the Great), the Two-Horned One, came to where we then lived across the mountains in Afghanistan. Before he departed, he left behind some of his men led by a general called Shakalash who settled with his troops in those valleys, and they married local women. We, the Kalash, are their descendants. We Kalash are named after the general."

The reference to Alexander as the Two-Horned One was intriguing because he had been depicted many times on ancient Macedonian coins wearing a helmet adorned with a pair of goat horns. Had someone in recent times put Kasi up to that to legitimize the Kalash claim, or had the legend really been handed down through the millennia? When I asked Kasi, he spurned any talk that it was a recent addition to the Kalash collection of legendary tales. "It's always been the way we described Sikander in our stories," he said.

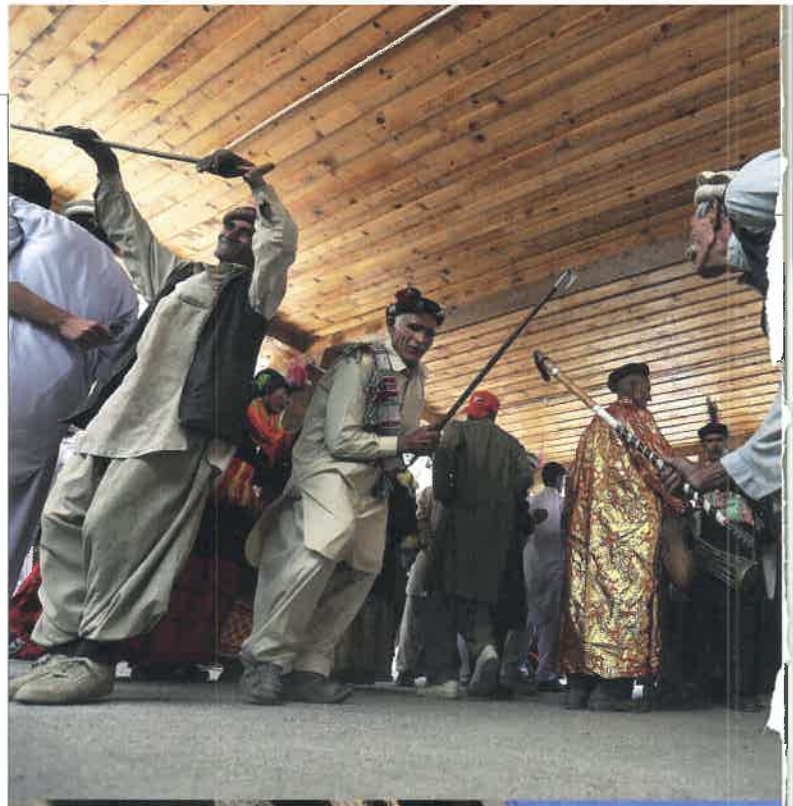
When the story ended, Kasi led me up a notched log ladder, the Kalash version of front doorsteps, to the village's largest house standing alone on the other side of the square. It faced the mud huts. Seated on a porch overlooking Rumbur was the Kalash leader, Saifulla Jain, a stocky, middle-aged man.

His heavy eyebrows met as he told me that the remaining Kalash were under strong pressure to convert to Islam. "The Saudi missionaries have plenty of money and they offer work to our men in Chitral if they become Muslims," he said. "You can see we are a very poor people and it's a great sacrifice for our men to refuse. Some do convert."

He continued, "We have a rule that if any Kalash convert to Islam, then they can't live among us anymore. They must leave our villages. This is often sad, it splits families, but it's necessary for us to keep our culture intact. There are so few Kalash now, but our ancestors defied the sultan long ago and we will not bow to the Muslims."

Saifulla turned solemn. "There's also our religion. I pray to Di Zau that in 2,000 years from now, we Kalash will still be honouring our gods." He led me up a steep mountain path to the village burial ground. Once, the Kalash carved life-sized, wooden warriors astride horses to guard the graves of loved ones, just like the Macedonians in Alexander's time.

Now, just a single effigy of a warrior in a helmet and fighting tunic remained in the graveyard, a scattering of mounds at the edge of a pine forest. The six-foot-high statue, carved from oak, stood by an old grave. "All the other funerary statues were stolen, and you can find many in museums across the world. We'd like to get them all back, but we know it's impossible."



METIN AKTAS/ANADOLU AGENCY/GETTY IMAGES

THE KALASH USED TO LEAVE THEIR dead above ground to rot in open coffins, their worldly goods stacked around them, but now they buried them under the earth. "We can't leave them in the open anymore because the Muslims around here robbed the open graves."

That desecration was recent. When Wilfred Thesiger journeyed into the Kalash valleys across the border a half century earlier, he found ten carved wooden statues at the foot of open graves. "Corpses were in view, laid out in open wooden coffins and then taken to a corner of a field and left there to disintegrate above ground," he wrote in his *Among the Mountains*.

Despite Muslim incursions, Saifulla said, the Kalash were defiantly keeping their culture intact. A curious annual fertility ritual, still performed, was a unique expression of their culture which I suspect did not emanate from Alexander's troops. A fit young virgin boy, aged about 14, was sent high into the mountains to spend the entire Spring season alone with the goatherds. He had to gorge himself on their milk every day and come back down to the village as summer approached, immensely fat.

The boy then had to choose any female he favoured in the village, a married woman or a young girl his age even if she was a virgin, willing or unwilling, to have ritual sex.

No wonder the Sultan of Kabul was horrified by the Kalash. Horror of sinful horrors, their women could even initiate and effect divorce and have open affairs with other men before returning to their compliant husbands. Saifulla confirmed that the Kalash made their own mulberry wine, and their festivals usually turned into bacchanalia with even girls in their late teens getting tipsy by nightfall and propositioning men for a tumble in the dark.

Dealing with sticky fingers

Theft is the enemy of good business, leaving less for profit, wages and the taxman

THE EMPTATION OFTEN leads to theft. That's why companies should never have controls that are so lax that employees become tempted.

I find it's usually better for financial performance and the simple pleasures of interaction within businesses to have long-serving employees.

For this, you need to provide a competitively-paid and enjoyable workplace. We are fortunate to have some great people who have chosen to work for our family and our businesses for decades and I hope we remember to show our appreciation adequately.

But it is not responsible employment to leave tempting opportunities for dishonesty. To know this, as an owner-manager you have to understand your systems, or perhaps the lack of them.

I've heard it said that, in the restaurant trade, all employees always steal — if you let them. I was an investor in (and lawyer for) a small London chain, Cubana, when it was a start-up. Phil Oppenheim and Anthony Coombs, two former Tory ministers who were its instigation, could not decide which of them should head the board so they asked me. It was my first chairmanship. They didn't pay me so perhaps were cleverer than I thought. Phil not only put cameras over the till but also in the stockroom. He is still the most impressive micro-manager of cost control I have ever worked with.

THE WORST CASE I'VE ever had contend with was a long-employed senior manager who had benefitted from an undisclosed interest with suppliers and, we believed, had been over-invoicing. The settlement agreement precludes me from revealing much, but we might even have made a net gain from the recovery had I not retained such expensive lawyers. At the time of dismissal, I feared the employee might abscond abroad — so I needed advisors with the requisite reach. It wasn't just about the money. Betrayal of trust hurts.

Another, smaller scale theft was an accounts clerk who cleverly fiddled the cash flow and stock figures in one of our shops, siphoning off enough to support a very active social life. She was cheerful and likeable: we even gave her an employee loan to cover some personal crisis to be paid back through the payroll.

That was before the auditors discovered accounting anomalies. The court bailiff and the private investigator say there are no assets. It seems likely that she spent it all.

Unless she pays us back soon I will bankrupt her. I have to really — *pour encourager les autres*, as Voltaire said. All our other staff know about the crime (we went civil because the police either weren't interested or, just as likely, didn't understand the fraud). Bankruptcy ruins your credit for seven years and to my mind will be a light reproach for thieving for lifestyle spending.

SINCE THOSE EDUCATIVE experiences, we hired a governance expert and said goodbye to the finance director. We are now far more corporate in our culture, but try to retain the best of our old character. Dogs are still welcome in the office, so long as they don't fight or wee on my boardroom carpet.

While I believe our vehicles are honest for now, it is foolish to be complacent. When I opened up to a business friend about the theft, he told me a cousin he employed in marketing who had established a front company for false invoicing. The truth is that most companies can point to similar examples and all of these are initially embarrassing.

Unless she pays us back soon, I shall bankrupt her. I have to, really — *pour encourager les autres*

It is human nature to be tempted and at some point virtually everyone will feel the pressures of financial stress. This does not mean there is anything but a small minority of employees who steal (or justify to themselves some unauthorised "borrowing"). It is, however, unfair to everyone not to have sensible controls in place.

WHEN DEALING WITH partners and shareholders rather than employees, it is worthwhile having a shareholders' agreement that makes it clear how participants can take money out of the enterprise. This helps prevent any unpleasant surprises. The self-entitled business partner is just as common as the dishonest employee; again, usually because you let them.

Good controls should mean that you can worry less. What bothers me most are the misdemeanours I shall never discover. Workplace theft, fraud and larceny are wrong in themselves, manifestly, and the consequences ripple.

If my profits are lower it is harder for me to employ well and there is less for the taxman to collect.

Remember, my primary social duty is to make growing taxable profits, which feeds economic growth and pays for public services. "I give at the office," Warren Buffet has said, meaning he pays his taxes willingly.

Making a decent return on capital is hard enough in most industries. That's why preventing theft, like seeking efficiencies in bureaucracy, should be a process of continual improvement. ●

ILLUSTRATION BY VANESSA DELL; PETER DAZELEY/GETTY IMAGES

Raphael's masterful depiction of divine light owes much to Dante, who incorporated the latest optical thinking — which drew heavily on earlier Islamic science — in his visionary poetry

Let there be light

Martin Kemp

DAZZLING LIGHT IS A MANIFESTATION of the divine shared across many religions. We only need think of Diwali, the Hindu five-day autumn festival of lights or the Jewish holiday festival of Hanukkah held over the course of eight days and nights. Light also occupies a prime place in Christianity and Islam.

The primacy of light in creation is manifest at the beginning of the Bible in which God brings light where previously there had only been darkness. In the Quran light is not just created by God but is identified with God's presence: "God is the Light of the heavens and earth ... God guides whoever He will to his Light."

Optical science in mediaeval Europe drew heavily on Islamic optics in Latin translation, above all the *De Aspectibus* (On Appearances) by Ibn al-Haytham (Alhazen) in the eleventh century, which is one of the great works of science. Al-Haytham embraced the mathematical, physical and anatomical aspects of earlier Greek and Roman traditions, with the addition of his own experimental bent. Under the rubrics of direct illumination, reflection and refraction, the behaviour of light and the functioning of sight are analysed exhaustively.

Not least he deals with the "errors of direct vision and their causes". Errors arise from the limitation of sight in the face of extreme effects that lie "outside the range of moderateness", as when something is too far away, too bright or too dark, visible for too short a time, or too fast (like a spinning top). That phenomenon "outside the range of moderateness" plays a crucial role in Dante's *Divina Commedia*.

Dante is the most philosophical, theological, visionary and scientific of poets. His treatment of light is the supreme manifestation of his complex conjunction of deep learning and soaring imagination. On one hand his understanding of light as a phenomenon is what we would call scientific — based on a considerable grasp of medieval optics. On the other, his poetic and theological vision of light is full of transcendent rapture.

HIS ENGAGEMENT WITH THE SCIENCE OF SEEING IS ALREADY apparent in his earlier books of poetry. The first is the *Vita Nova* (or *Vita Nuova*, New Life), which was composed about 1292; the second is the *Convivio* (Banquet), written in the early years of the following century.

Although the *Vita Nova* is visionary and metaphysical in tone, accompanied by fervent biographical reflections, there are signs of the optics to come in the *Commedia*. Expressing his total devotion to Beatrice, he explains in his commentary on his own verses that the image of his deceased beloved "had been situated midpoint in the straight line that proceeded from that most gracious lady, Beatrice, and reached its end in my eyes". This alludes to the optical theory that clarity of sight was achieved by those straight rays that arrived perpendicularly at the surface of the eye, above all the ray that passes precisely through the central axis of the pupil and eye.

We also find his first reference to effects that lie outside the "range of moderateness":

> In her countenance appear such things
> As exhibit a part of the joy of Paradise.
> I mean in her eyes and in her sweet smile,
> For here Love bears them as if to his lair.
> They overwhelm our intellect,
> As a ray of sunlight does weak vision.

In his commentary, Dante comments that "here we must understand that in a certain way these things dazzle our intellect, in as much as certain things are affirmed to exist which our intellect cannot observe, that is to say God, eternity, and primal matter". The stakes go far beyond terrestrial optics.

Dante explains in his commentaries in the *Convivio* how the eye actually functions. The passage that images make through the air and into the eye is "completed" in the water (the aqueous humour) within the pupil of the eye:

> because that water has a boundary — almost like a mirror, which is glass backed by lead — it cannot pass any further but is arrested there like a ball that is stopped when it strikes something, so that the form, which cannot be seen in the transparent medium, now appears lucid and defined ... The visual spirit passes from the pupil to the front of the brain where is the sensitive power, where it is represented without passage of time, and thus we see it.

This is an effective simplification of the process that the mediaeval specialists in optics had gleaned from Islamic science.

DANTE'S INTEGRATION OF SCIENCE INTO HIS POETIC VISION reaches its apogee in the *Divina Commedia*, written during the first and second decades of the fourteenth century while he was in political exile from his native Florence. In the *Commedia*, the poet's acts of seeing, which he describes vividly, are regularly cast in terms that are consistent with mediaeval science. Unsurprisingly, light features little in the punitive gloom of *Inferno*. There are encouraging glimpses in *Purgatorio*, but it is in the

Raphael, *The Liberation of St Peter from Prison*, 1514, Stanza d'Eliodoro, Vatican, Rome

PETER BARRITT/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Paradiso that light comes into its own. In his journey through the celestial spheres with his beloved Beatrice, Dante continually struggles to withstand escalating visions of intense light.

Somehow, in telling the story, Dante merges *scienza* and *poesia; intelletto* and *fantasia*. One example, from the beginning of the *Paradiso* can stand for many:

> Beatrice had to her left flank
> Turned round to look at the sun:
> An eagle never looked at it more steadily.
>
> And as the second ray always issues
> And rebounds from where their first ray struck,
> Just like a pilgrim who wishes to return,
>
> So from her action, infused into my eyes
> By my imagination, my action was enabled,
> And I fixed my eyes on the sun other than as we can do.

The two references combine science and legend. The rebounding of a light ray along a set course from the point at which it strikes a surface provides the foundation for the science of reflection. The eagle refers to the animal tales in the mediaeval *Bestiary* in which eagles are credited with being able to stare directly at the fierce radiance of the sun.

Dante's reaction to the dazzling glare of divine light oscillates between his being blinded to an enhanced ability to see what the eyes cannot normally tolerate. Crucially, the extension of his sense of sight is facilitated by Beatrice. She explains that his hard-won knowledge of optical science on earth simply does not work in the heavenly realm.

In his climatic vision of heaven, Dante is miraculously enabled to see what cannot be seen:

> My sight in breadth and height
> Was not confounded, but took in
> The full extent and nature of the jubilation.
>
> Nearness and distance adds nothing, takes away nothing,
> Because where God governs without an intermediary
> Natural law holds no sway.

Even here a scientific analogy is adduced. He compares the sublime ineffability of the Trinity — unseeable with his rational eye — to the mathematicians' traditional inability to "square the circle" (to devise a formula for a circle precisely equal in area to a given square).

Ultimately there are things that lie beyond the most enhanced scope of human vision and visualization. At the very end of the

Commedia, even Dante's *alta fantasia* (high imagination) fails, and all that is left is to surrender totally to "the love which moves the sun and the other stars".

HOW WERE PAINTERS TO EMULATE Dante's verbal evocation of the transcendence of divine light? Dante can activate our mind's eye and let us envisage blinding radiance. In describing the brightest of lights the painter is limited to the material brightness of white pigment on a palette.

In the Renaissance, the traditional use of gold to evoke divine light was discouraged. Surely this was one area in which the poets must triumph in the *paragone* — in the courtly debate about the merits of the various arts. Leonardo famously insisted that the poet could never emulate the painter's description of natural appearance. But, the Dantesque poet could reasonably ask, what about the "description" of the unseeable?

Painters adopted a variety of stratagems to portray divine light within scenes that were set up naturalistically. The trick was to make it look as if light was doing something that stood outside the naturalistic framework. A miraculous effusion of light could move in contradiction to the natural light flow in a scene or disobey natural law, as when Michelangelo's *St Paul* in the Capella Paolina falls from his horse and cannot fend off Christ's shaft of blinding light with his raised hand. Divine light, as Beatrice stressed, does not obey earthly laws.

The Renaissance artist who best succeeds in evoking divine dazzle was neither of the known experts in Dante, Michelangelo or Leonardo. Rather it is Raphael.

We tend not to think of Raphael as an intellectualising artist in the same league as the Platonic Michelangelo and Aristotelian Leonardo. However, there is good evidence that points to Raphael's direct dialogue with Dante. His father, Giovanni Santi, an underrated painter, was also a poet and author, whose chief composition was a long *Rhyming Chronicle* in honour of Federico da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino. It was written in *terza rima* (3-line units) in overt emulation of Dante.

Giovanni died in 1494, before Raphael's 12th birthday, but it is reasonable to think that Giovanni's precocious son was introduced to Dante at an early age. Raphael himself aspired to write poetry. There are six rough drafts for sonnets on drawings connected with his frescoes in the Stanza della Segnatura in in the Vatican early in the second decade of the sixteenth century.

One of the murals was devoted to poetry, and portrayed muses and authors, ancient and modern, congregated on Mount Parnassus under Apollo's command. The stern-jawed Dante was of course present. Dante also features in the *Disputa*, devoted to theology, and is the only historical person to warrant two appearances.

Painters adopted a variety of stratagems to portray divine light. The trick was to make it look as if light was doing something that stood outside the naturalistic framework

FROM THE TIME OF THE *DISPUTA*, RAPHAEL EXPLORED a series of Dantesque dazzles. The obvious pictures to look at are the *Sistine Madonna* from c.1514, with its dazzling corona of vaporous cloud-angels, and the *Transfiguration*, his final painting, in which the three disciples on Mount Tabor are stunned optically and physically by the irresistible light emanating from the white-clad Christ.

We will look at two less prominent paintings, the *Liberation of St. Peter from Prison* from 1514, and the *Vision of Ezekiel* from about two years later. They show the deep penetration of Dantesque motifs in paintings on different scales. The *Liberation* occupies a wall in the Vatican, while the tiny Ezekiel is an intimate painting, presumably undertaken for a pious connoisseur. The miraculous release is described in the Acts of the Apostles.

> Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers ... Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, 'Arise quickly!' And his chains fell off his hands. Then the angel ... said to him, 'Put on your garment and follow me.' So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.

In the field to the left of the intruding window, Raphael has differentiated three distinct types of light source: the soft glimmer from the rising sun; a crescent moon crossed by a streak of dark cloud; and a blazing torch. The rearmost soldier on the left has seen the divine light, presumably through a window of the cell — to his own cost. His armoured companions are belatedly stirring into action. In the corresponding space to the right, the luminescent angel leads the dazed St. Peter to freedom, while the sleeping soldiers slump on the steps, their eyes untroubled by the unfolding drama. Their failure to see the divine light recalls the inability of the soldiers in Piero della Francesca's *Dream of Constantine* to perceive the light that emanates from the invading angel.

PETER BARRITT/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

The central space, framed in brutal stone, is a wonderful theatre of light. The blast of angelic light off the steely armour

Raphael, *The Vision of Ezekiel*, c. 1518, Palazzo Pitti, Florence

LEEMAGE/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

of the guards, and the rebounds of light from the walls, are described with astonishingly concise precision, again reminiscent of Piero della Francesca. The prominence of Peter's dark fetters (*vincoli*) corresponds to the Biblical account and alludes to the Roman church of San Pietro in Vincoli where Julius II was Cardinal before his elevation to the Papacy. As emphatically black is the impregnable grille of iron between us and the light, which serves optically to enhance the angel's luminosity.

The most intense light emanates from the twice-repeated angel. Enveloped almost translucently in fiery orange, he is only partly materialised against the blinding mandorla of gold-white, from which stabbing rays thrust into the darkness. Well might Peter be bewildered by what is happening. We can also well imagine that Dante would have recognised Raphael's expressive differentiation of types of light and types of seeing and non-seeing.

THE SMALL PAINTING OF *THE VISION OF EZEKIEL* WAS A STAR in the National Gallery's Raphael exhibition. It demonstrates that comparable effects can be intensely realised in an intimate manner. It is only 30cm (12 ins) wide. Ezekiel's own account of his vision is prolonged, complicated and difficult to condense into a single image, particularly within such a small compass. Raphael has synthesised the vision into a stern but benign God the Father born aloft weightlessly by two infant angels of a tangible kind and surrounded by the winged symbols of the four evangelists: the lion of St. Mark, the angel of St. Matthew, the eagle of St. John and the ox of St. Luke. They are realised with astonishing virtuosity.

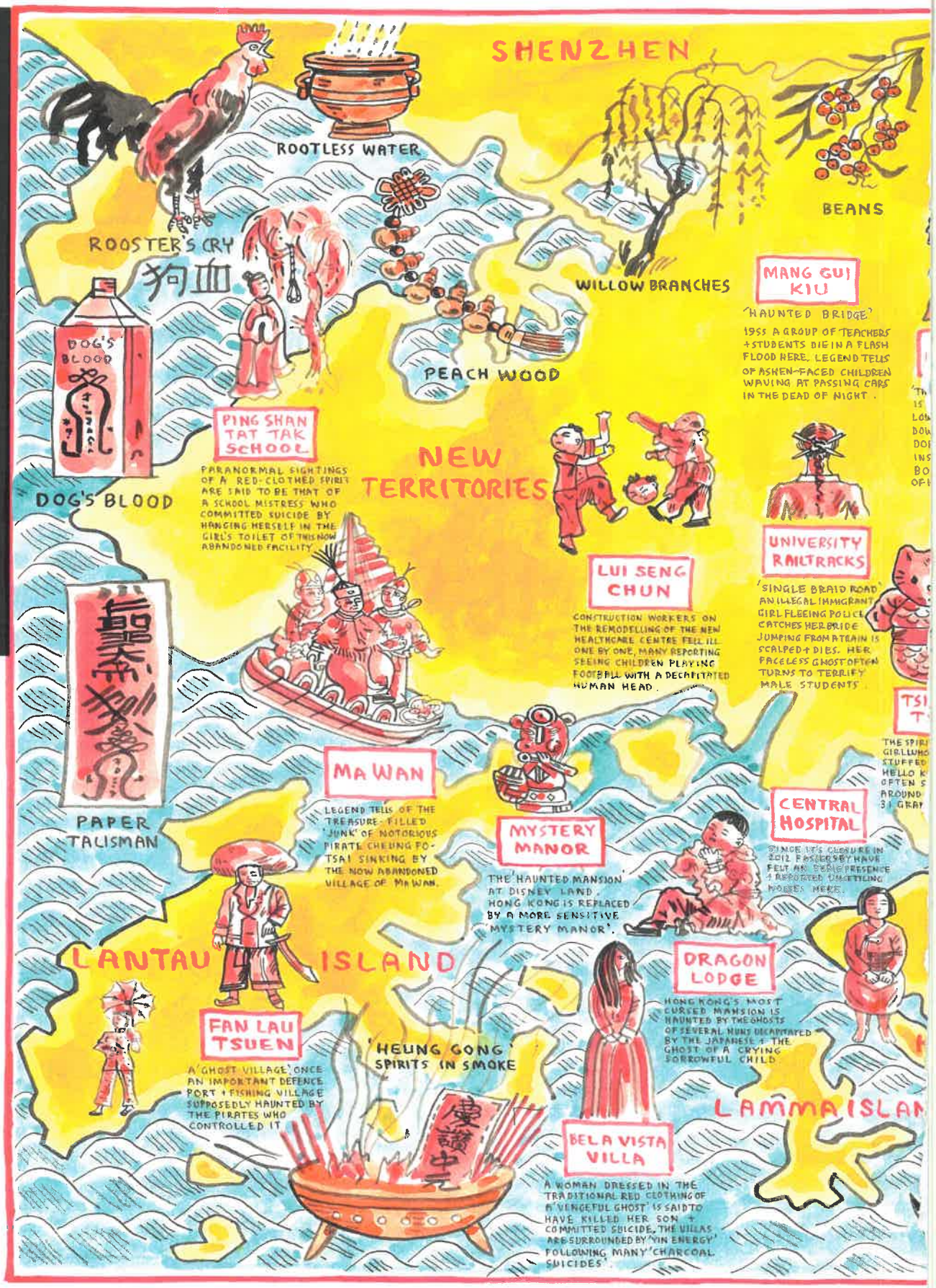
From a radiating glare above God's head, we are treated to a Dantesque explosion of gold light, which self-combusts into white formlessness. It is fringed by darkish clouds which evaporate into notably elusive cloud-angels, only just visible. Some heads are only described by incisions in the priming. At the lower left of the midground hill, which supports energetic trees, rays of light dart through an aperture in the cloud to strike two tiny persons (about 6mm high), accompanied by a horse. The figure with upraised arms is Ezekiel.

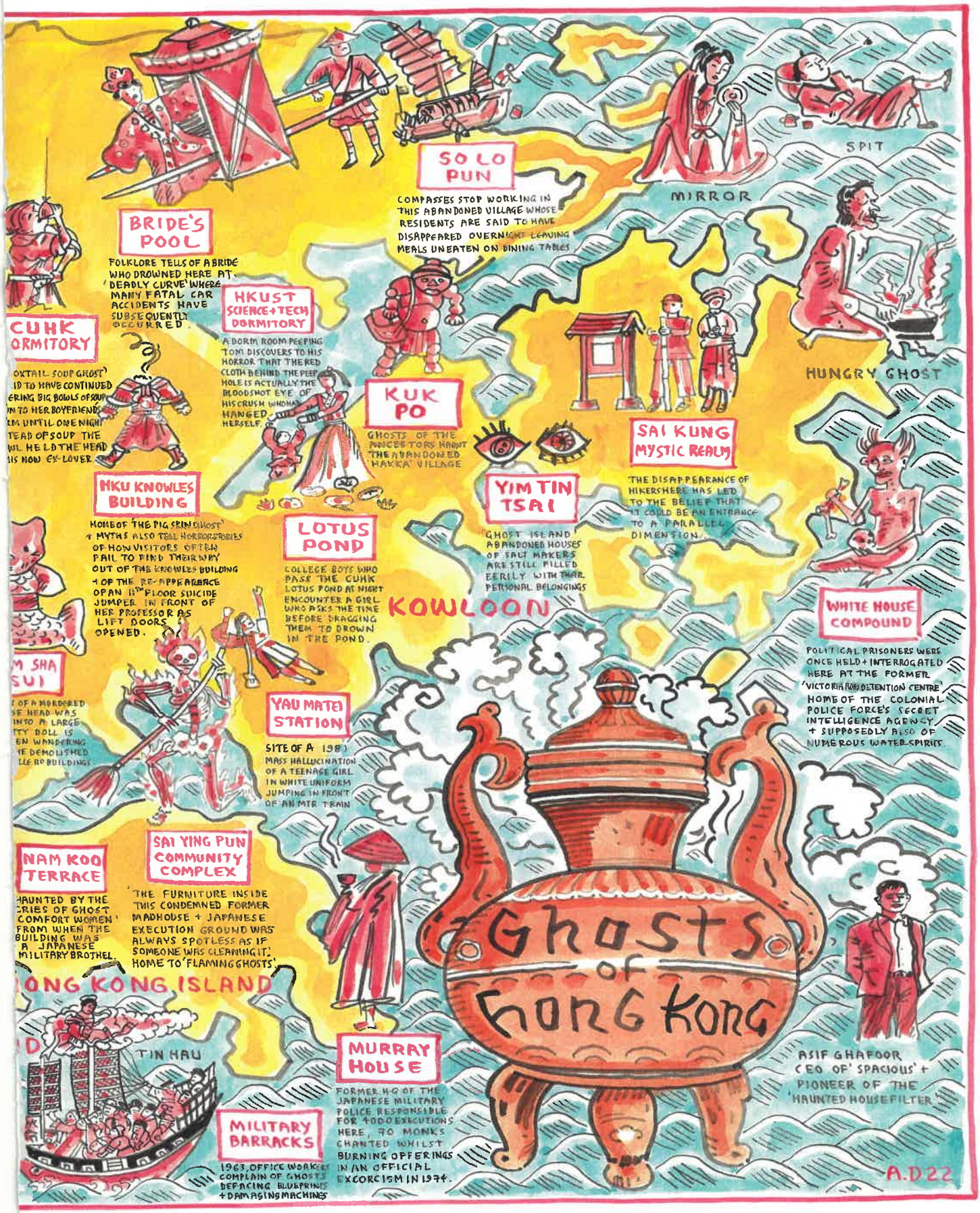
It is only gradually that we realise how spatially illogical is the scale of things in the tiny picture. The base of the clouds that support the central participants is actually behind the central tree at the base of the panel. If we push back the floating figure-group to the depth of the summit of the hill, it becomes a massive apparition. Recall Beatrice's anti-perspective principle that "natural law holds no sway" in the transcendent realm of heavenly visions. Through a conscious play on contradictory scales, a tiny picture achieves a dizzying level of monumentality.

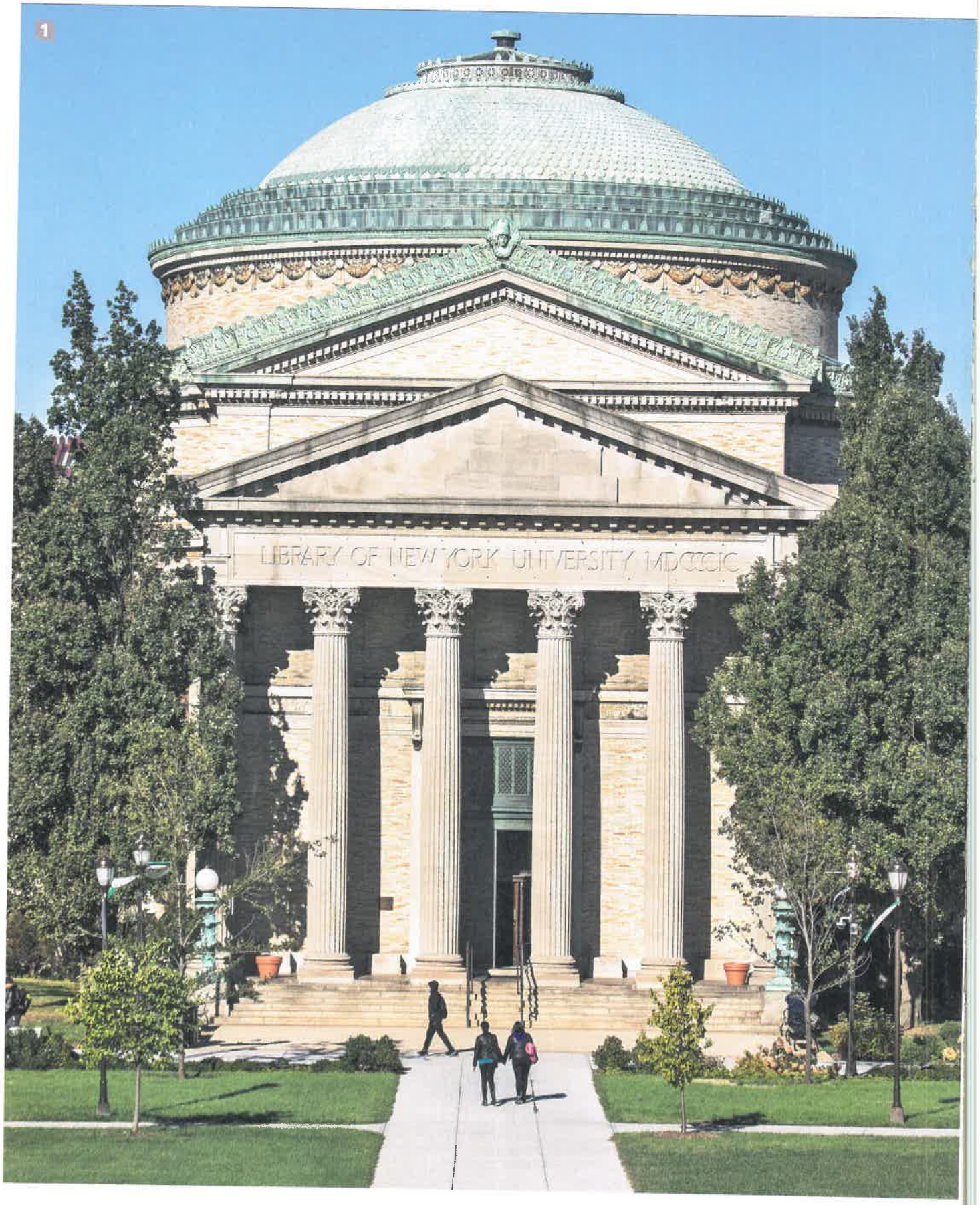
We can well imagine that Dante would have recognised Raphael's expressive differentiation of types of light and types of seeing, and not being able to see clearly at all. In the context of a *paragone* with Dante's *Paradiso*, Raphael may perhaps allow us to declare a draw on behalf of painting.

Martin Kemp is Emeritus Professor of the History of Art, Trinity College, Oxford and author of *Heavenly Visions: Dante and the Art of Divine Light* (Lund Humphries, 2021)

Adam Dant on...

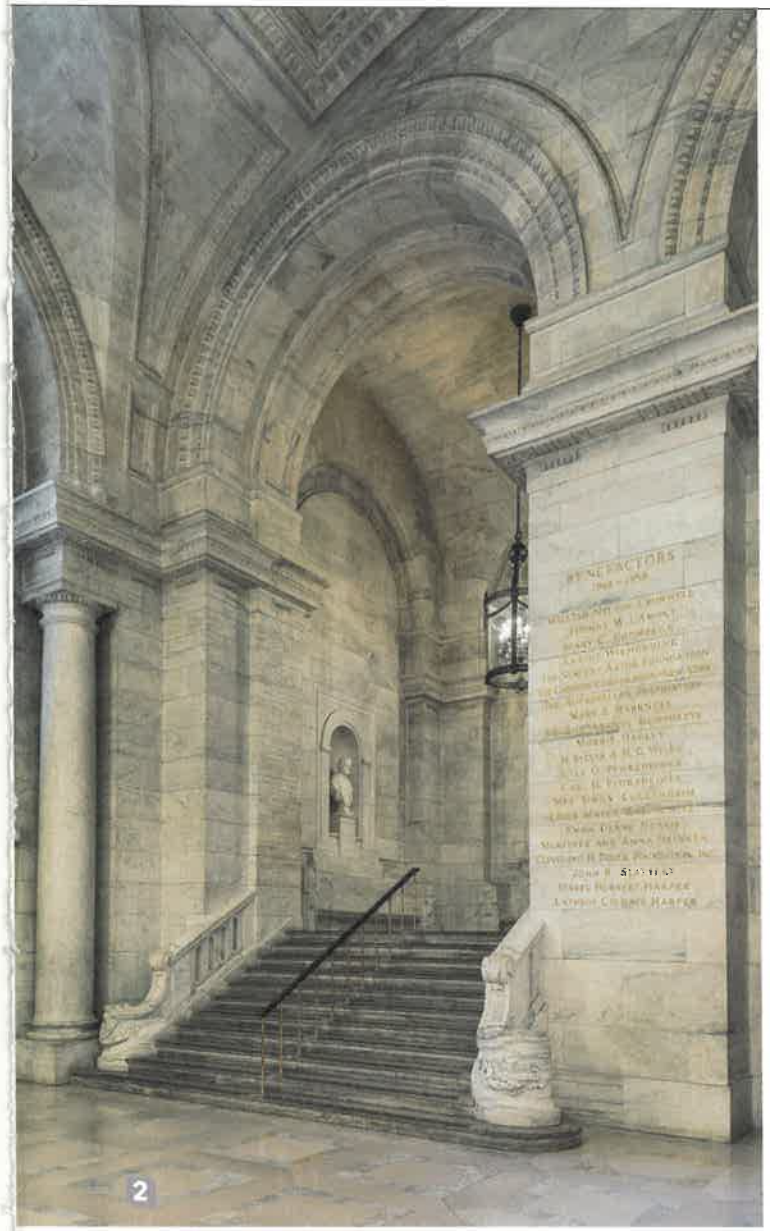

SHENZHEN
ROOTLESS WATER
BEANS
ROOSTER'S CRY
狗血
WILLOW BRANCHES
MANG GUI KIU
'HAUNTED BRIDGE'
1955 A GROUP OF TEACHERS + STUDENTS DIE IN A FLASH FLOOD HERE. LEGEND TELLS OF ASHEN-FACED CHILDREN WAVING AT PASSING CARS IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT.
DOG'S BLOOD
PEACH WOOD
PING SHAN TAT TAK SCHOOL
PARANORMAL SIGHTINGS OF A RED-CLOTHED SPIRIT ARE SAID TO BE THAT OF A SCHOOL MISTRESS WHO COMMITTED SUICIDE BY HANGING HERSELF IN THE GIRL'S TOILET OF THIS NOW ABANDONED FACILITY.
NEW TERRITORIES
UNIVERSITY RAILTRACKS
'SINGLE BRAID ROAD' AN ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT GIRL FLEEING POLICE CATCHES HER BRIDE JUMPING FROM A TRAIN IS SCALPED + DIES. HER FACELESS GHOST OFTEN TURNS TO TERRIFY MALE STUDENTS.
LUI SENG CHUN
CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ON THE REMODELLING OF THE NEW HEALTHCARE CENTRE FELL ILL ONE BY ONE, MANY REPORTING SEEING CHILDREN PLAYING FOOTBALL WITH A DECAPITATED HUMAN HEAD.
PAPER TALISMAN
MA WAN
LEGEND TELLS OF THE TREASURE-FILLED 'JUNK' OF NOTORIOUS PIRATE CHEUNG PO-TSAI SINKING BY THE NOW ABANDONED VILLAGE OF MA WAN.
MYSTERY MANOR
THE 'HAUNTED MANSION' AT DISNEY LAND HONG KONG IS REPLACED BY A MORE SENSITIVE 'MYSTERY MANOR'.
CENTRAL HOSPITAL
SINCE IT'S CLOSURE IN 2012 PASSERS BY HAVE FELT AN EERIE PRESENCE + REPORTED UNSETTLING NOISES HERE.
LANTAU ISLAND
DRAGON LODGE
HONG KONG'S MOST CURSED MANSION IS HAUNTED BY THE GHOSTS OF SEVERAL NUNS DECAPITATED BY THE JAPANESE + THE GHOST OF A CRYING SORROWFUL CHILD.
FAN LAU TSUEN
A 'GHOST VILLAGE' ONCE AN IMPORTANT DEFENCE PORT + FISHING VILLAGE SUPPOSEDLY HAUNTED BY THE PIRATES WHO CONTROLLED IT.
'HEUNG GONG' SPIRITS IN SMOKE
LAMMA ISLAN
BELA VISTA VILLA
A WOMAN DRESSED IN THE TRADITIONAL RED CLOTHING OF A 'VENGEFUL GHOST' IS SAID TO HAVE KILLED HER SON + COMMITTED SUICIDE. THE VILLAS ARE SURROUNDED BY 'YIN ENERGY' FOLLOWING MANY 'CHARCOAL SUICIDES'.

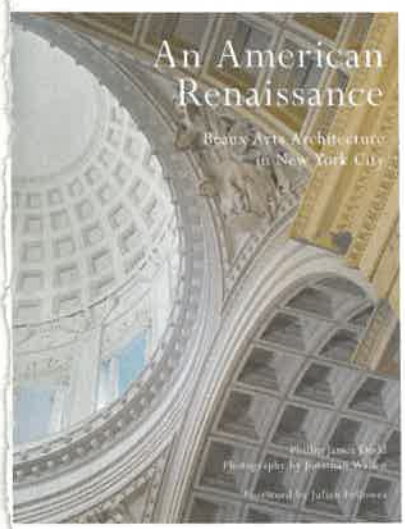

Ghosts of Hong Kong
SOLO PUN
COMPASSES STOP WORKING IN THIS ABANDONED VILLAGE WHOSE RESIDENTS ARE SAID TO HAVE DISAPPEARED OVERNIGHT LEAVING MEALS UNEATEN ON DINING TABLES
SPIT
MIRROR
BRIDE'S POOL
FOLKLORE TELLS OF A BRIDE WHO DROWNED HERE AT 'DEADLY CURVE' WHERE MANY FATAL CAR ACCIDENTS HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY OCCURRED.
HKUST SCIENCE+TECH DORMITORY
A DORM ROOM PEEPING TOM DISCOVERS TO HIS HORROR THAT THE RED CLOTH BEHIND THE PEEP HOLE IS ACTUALLY THE BLOODSHOT EYE OF HIS CRUSH WHO HAD HANGED HERSELF.
CUHK ORMITORY
OXTAIL SOUP GHOST' ID TO HAVE CONTINUED ERING BIG BOWLS OF SOUP IN TO HER BOYFRIENDS EM UNTIL ONE NIGHT TEAD OF SOUP THE WL HE LD THE HEAD IS NOW EX-LOVER
KUK PO
GHOSTS OF THE ANCESTORS HAUNT THE ABANDONED 'HAKKA' VILLAGE
HUNGRY GHOST
SAI KUNG MYSTIC REALM
THE DISAPPEARANCE OF HIKERS HERE HAS LED TO THE BELIEF THAT IT COULD BE AN ENTRANCE TO A PARALLEL DIMENSION.
HKU KNOWLES BUILDING
HOME OF THE PIG SKIN GHOST' + MYTHS ALSO TELL HORROR STORIES OF HOW VISITORS OFTEN FAIL TO FIND THEIR WAY OUT OF THE KNOWLES BUILDING + OF THE RE-APPEARANCE OF AN 11TH FLOOR SUICIDE JUMPER IN FRONT OF HER PROFESSOR AS LIFT DOORS OPENED.
YIM TIN TSAI
'GHOST ISLAND' ABANDONED HOUSES OF SALT MAKERS ARE STILL FILLED EERILY WITH THEIR PERSONAL BELONGINGS
LOTUS POND
COLLEGE BOYS WHO PASS THE CUHK LOTUS POND AT NIGHT ENCOUNTER A GIRL WHO ASKS THE TIME BEFORE DRAGGING THEM TO DROWN IN THE POND.
KOWLOON
WHITE HOUSE COMPOUND
POLITICAL PRISONERS WERE ONCE HELD + INTERROGATED HERE AT THE FORMER 'VICTORIA DETENTION CENTRE' HOME OF THE COLONIAL POLICE FORCE'S SECRET INTELLIGENCE AGENCY + SUPPOSEDLY ALSO OF NUMEROUS WATER SPIRITS.
M SHA SUI
OF A MURDERED SE HEAD WAS INTO A LARGE TTY DOLL IS EN WANDERING HE DEMOLISHED LEE RO BUILDINGS.
YAU MATEI STATION
SITE OF A 1981 MASS HALLUCINATION OF A TEENAGE GIRL IN WHITE UNIFORM JUMPING IN FRONT OF AN MTR TRAIN
NAM KOO TERRACE
HAUNTED BY THE CRIES OF GHOST 'COMFORT WOMEN' FROM WHEN THE BUILDING WAS A JAPANESE MILITARY BROTHEL.
SAI YING PUN COMMUNITY COMPLEX
'THE FURNITURE INSIDE THIS CONDEMNED FORMER MADHOUSE + JAPANESE EXECUTION GROUND WAS ALWAYS SPOTLESS AS IF SOMEONE WAS CLEANING IT.' HOME TO 'FLAMING GHOSTS'
ONG KONG ISLAND
TIN HAU
MURRAY HOUSE
FORMER HQ OF THE JAPANESE MILITARY POLICE RESPONSIBLE FOR 4000 EXECUTIONS HERE, 70 MONKS CHANTED WHILST BURNING OFFERINGS IN AN OFFICIAL EXORCISM IN 1974.
MILITARY BARRACKS
1963, OFFICE WORKERS COMPLAIN OF GHOSTS DEFACING BLUEPRINTS + DAMAGING MACHINES
ASIF GHAFOOR CEO OF 'SPACIOUS' + PIONEER OF THE 'HAUNTED HOUSE FILTER'
A.D22


1
LIBRARY OF NEW YORK UNIVERSITY MDCCCIC

STUDIO

Beaux-Arts Architecture
in New York City
By James Panero





Above, New York Public Library's Astor Hall

Far left, Gould Memorial Library with its rotunda

Near left, the lavish 412-page book with around 300 new colour photographs in large format folio

JUST AS AUGUSTUS FOUND ROME a city of bricks and left it a city of marble, New York's robber barons found a city of brownstones and left it a city gilded in gold. From 1870 to 1930, between the end of the Civil War and the start of the Great Depression, this Gilded Age defined the city in ways that continue to enrich its existence today. Amidst the forest of cookie-cutter high rises that now slice through the city skyline, it can be easy to miss the great Beaux-Arts architecture that resulted from these earlier aspirations. Still, most New Yorkers live for what remains of this age of exuberance, especially compared to the International Style of the last 70 years that has brutally tried to supplant it.

New York would be little more than another faceless glass-and-steel city were it not for its Gilded Age buildings and institutions —from the main branch of the **NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY** and **GRAND CENTRAL TERMINAL** to the many forgotten remnants we delight in rediscovering and now fight to preserve. *An American Renaissance: Beaux-Arts Architecture in New York City*, written by Phillip James Dodd with photography by Jonathan Wallen, is a gilded embrace of this legacy. Produced by Images Publishing, the lavish 412-page publication with some 300 new colour photographs in large format folio takes us up close and personal with 20 of the finest examples of Beaux-Arts architecture, arranged chronologically, that continue to enliven the city today.

The book reminds me of my own memorable moments of urban discovery, such as stepping up into the golden rotunda of the **GOULD MEMORIAL LIBRARY** [1] (Stanford White, 1899-1901) and walking in the falling snow around the mausoleums of **WOODLAWN CEMETERY** (built between 1884 and 1920). I will never forget that feeling of standing inside the small laureled chamber of the **SOLDIERS & SAILORS MONUMENT** (Charles and Arthur Stoughton, 1902) or looking up for the first time at the celestial vault of **GRAND CENTRAL** (designed by Reed & Stem with Warren & Wetmore, 1913) after it was cleaned of decades of cigarette smoke in the 1990s. Or how about settling into a book in the main reading room of the **PUBLIC LIBRARY** [2] (Carrère & Hastings, 1911) or having a drink in what was originally the **SAMUEL TILDEN HOUSE** (remodelled by Calvert Vaux in 1884)?

This book collects all of these Gilded Age impressions and suggests we have much more to see. Who knew about the polychromed classicism of the **WILLIAMSBURGH SAVINGS BANK** (George B. Post, 1875) or the Byzantine splendour of the **CUNARD BUILDING** (Benjamin Wistar Morris, 1921)? Climbing around, looking up, and zooming in, Dodd and Wallen have done the job of revealing these delights, ones that might be new to those who live across the pond or even right next door.

Despite living just down the block from the **GENERAL**

GRANT NATIONAL MEMORIAL [3] (John H. Duncan, 1897), I am ashamed to say I have never set foot inside the building, based on the mausoleum at Halicarnassus, that illustrates the book's cover. That means I have yet to answer, with absolute certainty, Groucho Marx's famous question from the 1950s quiz show *You Bet Your Life*, "Who is buried in Grant's Tomb?"

JULIAN FELLOWES SUPPLIES A FOREWORD for the book. It is clear that Gilded Age architecture has recently been on his mind. Rather than a mere costume drama, *The Gilded Age*, his new television series, is more like an architectural drama, as architecture and architects are the scene stealers of the show. "In the space of 70 years the city's population exploded from 123,000 in 1820 to over two million in 1890," he writes in the book. Reflecting the city's burgeoning wealth and aspiration, "the Beaux-Arts style came to the United States, and in particular to New York, at precisely the right moment".

The architecture was lavish and drew freely from eclectic sources, from Imperial Rome and the Italian Renaissance to the French baroque and farther afield.

"Stanford White based his design for the rooftop at **MADISON SQUARE GARDEN II** on the Giralda in Seville;" Fellowes writes, "his rotunda at Gould Memorial Library emulated the Reading Room at the British Museum in London; and the façade of the Metropolitan Club was heavily influenced by the Reform Club on London's Pall Mall."

PHOTOGRAPH BY JONATHAN WALLEN. TAKEN FROM AN AMERICAN RENAISSANCE: BEAUX-ARTS ARCHITECTURE IN NEW YORK CITY (IMAGES PUBLISHING GROUP, 2021)

The architecture was lavish and drew freely from Imperial Rome, the French baroque and the Italian Renaissance

Fellowes's television series reminds us how the city's great social tension was not so much between upstairs and downstairs as between old money and new—the old downtown Knickerbockers versus the new uptown Industrialists building palaces gilded with the riches (and even the walls) of Europe. To the old guard of Livingstons and Astors, the new regime of Huntingtons and Rockefellers were parvenus building their gaudy McMansions along Fifth Avenue—or make that MacMansions, as in the case of Andrew Carnegie, the son of a poor Scottish weaver who became the richest industrialist in America.

SUCH RAGS-TO-RICHES STORIES WERE THE NORM in this Gilded Age. With an essay by Richard Guy Wilson and informative descriptions by Dodd, the book is full of gilded images and observations. Born in rural Pennsylvania, Henry Clay Frick learned to mine coal, and turn it into coke. He helped found U.S. Steel, and built an art-filled mansion on Fifth Avenue (now **THE FRICK COLLECTION**; Thomas Hastings, 1914).

Frank W. Woolworth arrived from rural New York and got the idea of his "five-and-dime" variety store while working as a stock boy, and erected the tallest building in the world on lower Broadway (**THE WOOLWORTH BUILDING**; Cass Gilbert, 1913). Americans "are instinctively in sympathy with the Renaissance," observed Bernard Berenson, as New Yorkers in particular saw the flowering of classical civilisation in their own lush ascendancy. As Otto Kahn famously told the architect of his own **FIFTH AVENUE MANSION** (J. Armstrong Stenhouse with C.P.H Gilbert, 1918): "It's a sin to keep money idle."

Just as the old guard resented such exuberance, a corporate chastity took hold of the city following the Great Depression and belted it in steel cages. As new money became old, aging industries gave way to the abstractions of high finance and the poker face of a new ahistorical style. The Gilded Age has always had its enemies. "The golden gleam of the gilded surface hides the cheapness of the metal underneath," Mark Twain lamented way back in the 1870s. It might have been superficial, but still it proved to be New York's Golden Age, as these twenty glistening survivors attest.

James Panero is executive editor of *The New Criterion*

Above, the General Grant National Memorial, based on the mausoleum at Halicarnassus

Far left, the Alexander Hamilton US Custom House

Near left, the Morgan Library & Museum, which began as the private library of the financier J. Pierpont Morgan

Preaching the gospel of progressivism

George Owers is the editorial director of Forum Press. He tweets as @CapelLofft

The Critic Books

George Owers

THE LONGEVITY OF ELIZABETH II has (mostly) allowed us to avert our attention from the question of the relationship between church and state for a very long time. Given that her 70 years on the throne have seen the relentless rise of the forces of philistine secularism and constitutional vandalism, one cannot help but feel grateful for the benign obscurity that her reign has cast over such issues. Alas, this cannot be the case for much longer.

During her coronation in 1953, the Queen made solemn oaths to maintain the "true profession of the Gospel", "the Protestant Reformed Religion established by law", and the Church of England. She was anointed with holy oil as the chosen ruler of God in a ceremony that owes its ultimate origins to the monarchy of Israel, and which can be traced back in England to at least the coronation of Edgar in 973 AD.

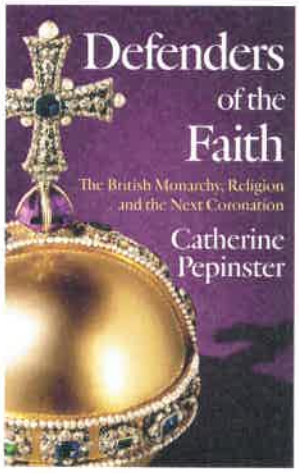
In 1953 this solemn ceremony was received with little in the way of controversy, except in terms of the debate over whether it should be televised. In the end it was, but with the most holy part of the rite — the coming of the Holy Spirit and God's blessings in the sacred moment of anointing — kept away from the nation's prying eyes.

If the next coronation is similar, one can only imagine the chorus of outraged, irreverent squawking that will sound from the amassed ranks of secular-liberal opinion-formers. Despite this unappetising prospect, it seems reasonable to discuss what form it should take now, given that 70 years have elapsed since the last one — a task that Catherine Pepinster's new book purports to undertake.

I say "purports to undertake", because in fact the vast majority of it is taken up with a rather pedestrian rehearsal of British religious and monarchical history since the Reformation, followed by long and dull accounts of what little we know about the spiritual lives of HM the Queen, Prince Philip and Prince Charles.

These central six chapters of the book are overwhelmingly preoccupied with a topic which clearly concerns the author more than any other: the nature of the relationship between Roman Catholicism and the monarchy, which seems like a rather odd focus given that the British monarchy has not been in communion with the Church of Rome since the 16th century.

She spends a large proportion of the book bewailing the historical inequities perpetrated against Ms Pepinster's co-religionists by the British establishment, and demonstrating how recent decades have seen a real — albeit cautious — rapprochement between the monarchy and Roman Catholics. She goes on to make a series of commonplace observations about the country's growing secularism, the rise of religious and cultural diversity, and the decline of Anglican congregations since 1953.



Defenders of the Faith: The British Monarchy, Religion and the Next Coronation
Catherine Pepinster
(Hachette, £25)

IF ONE WANTS TO KNOW WHAT the equivocating Ms Pepinster thinks the implications of all these trends are for the next coronation and relations between church and state, then one will have to read between the lines. Although her account of the various possibilities is a useful summary, working out what she actually favours is like trying to staple a jellyfish to wet soap.

Nonetheless, my interpretation is that she wishes to see the accession and coronation oaths altered to remove references to upholding the Protestant religion and the Church of England, and replaced with either some general promise to uphold all "religions and beliefs" equally, or perhaps some more emollient formula, which will at least satisfy the clearly tender sensibilities of Roman Catholics.

She also seems to tentatively endorse a slimmed-down coronation that (predictably) endorses "diversity" and "modernity", and which might be divided into two separate ceremonies, one "secular" and another religious. She stops short of advocating disestablishment of the Church of England explicitly, but the prospect doesn't seem to alarm her.

What is most disappointing about this book is that it skates around the substantial underlying issues, which are too tied up with the realities of the established Church of England to interest her much. Insofar as she does address them, her analysis implies a blithe acceptance of secularisation and the reduction of the monarchy to a free-floating symbol of diversity and multiculturalism, divested of its own spiritual inheritance.

MY ANALYSIS WOULD BE DIFFERENT. Although in practice, largely through indifference and improvisation, the Church of England is nowadays usually left to govern itself, it is still in theory subject to the decisions of a largely non-Anglican legislature. The idea of parlia-

Henry Kissinger

LEADERSHIP

Six Studies in World Strategy

Leadership: Six Studies in World Strategy
Henry Kissinger
(Allen Lane, £25)

Present-day lessons from past masters

Andrew Roberts

IN THE COURSE OF HIS 99 YEARS, Henry Kissinger has met many world statesmen both during and after his time as US National Security Adviser (1969-75) and Secretary of State (1973-77). This book is about six of the greatest of them, and what can be learned about their differing styles of leadership. As is often the case with Kissinger's books, lain over that basic framework are profound thoughts about the nature of history, philosophical musings about the human condition and warnings about the future of the West, with insights such as "No society can remain great if it loses faith in itself or if it systematically impugns its self-perception." New Yorkers who have recently pulled down the statues of Thomas Jefferson and Teddy Roosevelt should take note.

Kissinger posits the concept of what he calls a "Second Thirty Years War" coming almost exactly three centuries after the first one of 1618-48. The two wars against Germany and her allies from 1914 to 1945 "challenged the entire international system to overcome disillusionment in Europe and poverty in much of the rest of the world with new principles of order".

Just as the first Thirty Years War ended with the Peace of Westphalia, which created the system of nation states that we know today, so Kissinger believes that the post-1945 rules-based international order, based on the economic model agreed at Bretton Woods and Dunbarton Oaks, the political model based on the UN Charter, and the military model based on a strong United States and NATO, has served the world well in producing "new principles of order".

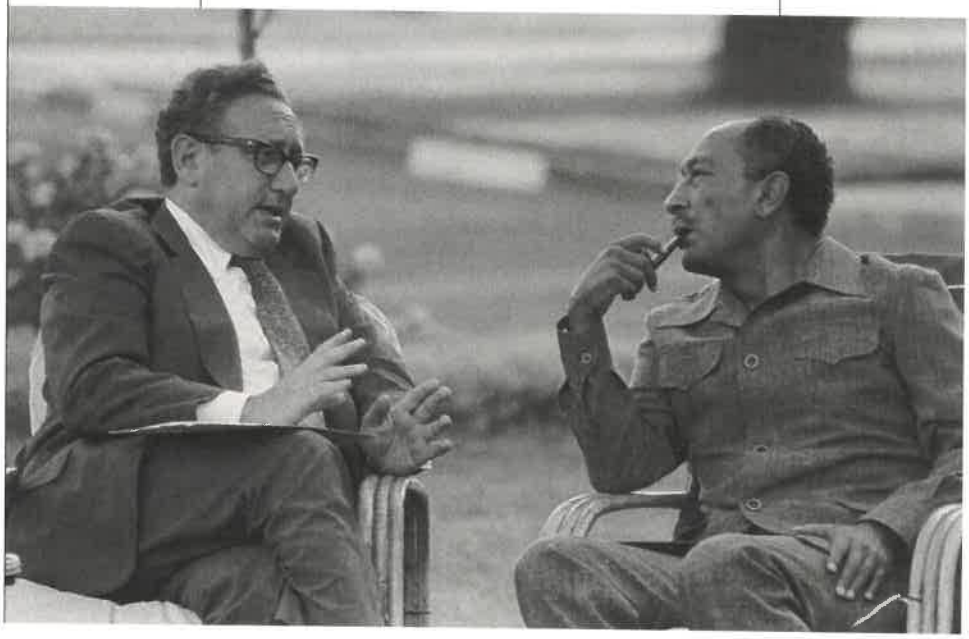
His six leaders — Konrad Adenauer, Charles de Gaulle, Richard Nixon, Anwar Sadat, Lee Kuan Yew and Margaret Thatcher — all played an important part in protecting the rules-based international order that Kissinger, a Jewish teenage refugee from Nazi Germany, recognises as the prime guarantor against renewed direct great power conflict. Yet he now fears that such an order "will be replaced in practice for an indeterminate period of time by an at least partially decoupled world". History shows that this must be avoided at all costs.

KISSINGER CONSIDERS WHAT HE CALLS history's "wider sea of vast and ineluctable tides", asking whether we are the mere playthings of huge impersonal forces where humanity is denied all choice, or whether, as he passionately believes, the tides of history have to be "applied through human agency and filtered through human perception". He concludes that "leading thinkers have imbued inchoate forces with the strength of destiny. Ironically, there has been no more efficient tool for the malign consolidation of power by individuals than theories of the inevitable laws of history." It is refreshing to read such a takedown of Marxism, Determinism, and the Whig interpretation of history.

Kissinger is on similarly strong philosophical ground when he considers the virtues of aristocracy as a form of pre-modern government, stemming from the fact that "Aristocrats did not understand themselves to have acquired their status through individual efforts. Position was inherent, not earned."

Despite the defects of aristocracy — nepotism, inefficiency, "wastrels and incompetents" — he points out that "The creative aspect of aristocracy was bound up in the ethic of *noblesse oblige*, as in the phrase 'To whom much is given much is expected.' Since aristocrats did not achieve their station, the best of them felt an obligation to engage in public service or social improvement." It takes a thinker who owed everything he achieved to his own widely acknowledged merit in Harvard and Washington to make such a welcome counter-cultural case.

OF THIS BOOK'S SIX LEADERS, none were aristocrats, although Charles de Gaulle hailed from the upper gentry. They were strivers, like Kissinger himself, and the author brings each alive superbly, with anecdotes about his relations with them and illuminating



Kissinger talks with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat during the Sinai II negotiations in 1975

DAVID HUME KENNERLY/GETTY IMAGES

Kissinger believes the last great transformation of the world was the Enlightenment, which replaced the age of faith. It is now being supplanted by algorithms

Andrew Roberts' latest book is *George III: the Life and Reign of Britain's Most Misunderstood Monarch* (Allen Lane, 2021), which won the Elizabeth Longford Prize for Historical Biography

insights into their leadership styles. Thus, Konrad Adenauer is hailed for his "strategy of humility", which brought defeated Germany back into the comity of nations in extraordinarily short order considering the scale of his country's crimes during the Second World War.

Kissinger shows how Adenauer "was determined to turn submission into a virtue" and recounts a moment in November 1949 when, during a parliamentary debate, Adenauer (highly unusually) shouted at opponents of continued cooperation with the Allies, "Who do you think lost the war?"

Charles de Gaulle led a country that had ended up on the winning side of the Second World War largely because of him. Kissinger calls his leadership technique "the strategy of will" and points out how much of Gaullism came down to the General's sheer belief in "the eternal France" rather than the realities of the political situation at the time.

De Gaulle's willpower saw France through the immediate postwar period, and Kissinger — who has a sixth sense for where genuine power lies — is clearly impressed by the way de Gaulle played a tremendously weak hand so dextrously.

The chapters on Lee Kuan Yew's "strategy of excellence" and Margaret Thatcher's "strategy of conviction" are similarly full of aperçus gleaned from personal knowledge, and, in the case of those two, friendship. The warmest pen portrait, however, is of Anwar Sadat and his "strategy of transcendence", which for all its statesmanship and courage led to his assassination in October 1981. Kissinger walked behind Sadat's coffin at his funeral, but noted he was the only mourner present two years later when he returned to pay respects at Sadat's tomb.

THE WORLD LEADER TO WHOM Kissinger was closest was, of course, Richard Nixon, who appointed him National Security Adviser and later Secretary of State, increasingly relied on him to run US foreign policy as his presidency became mired in Watergate, and kept him in place until he was forced to resign, whereupon President Ford kept Kissinger on as a signal of American stability and continuity. Kissinger's analysis of what he calls Nixon's "geopolitical concept of the national interest" is described as "the strategy of equilibrium".

This refers to the balance of power between the West, Soviet Russia, and a China that was emerging globally in large part due to Nixon's and Kissinger's policy of re-engagement. Whether this proves to be beneficial in the long run is yet to be seen. "The opening to China," Kissinger writes, "like every strategic success, was not only a response to contemporary problems but also an admissions ticket to future challenges."

As a result of space and cyber weapons and AI robots that can "seek their own targets and learn from experience", Kissinger regards permanent dialogue between the great powers as "imperative to ensure the stability of world order — and perhaps the survival of world civilization". The Dr Strangelove figure that Peter Sellers supposedly based on Kissinger in the eponymous movie is worlds away from the man himself.

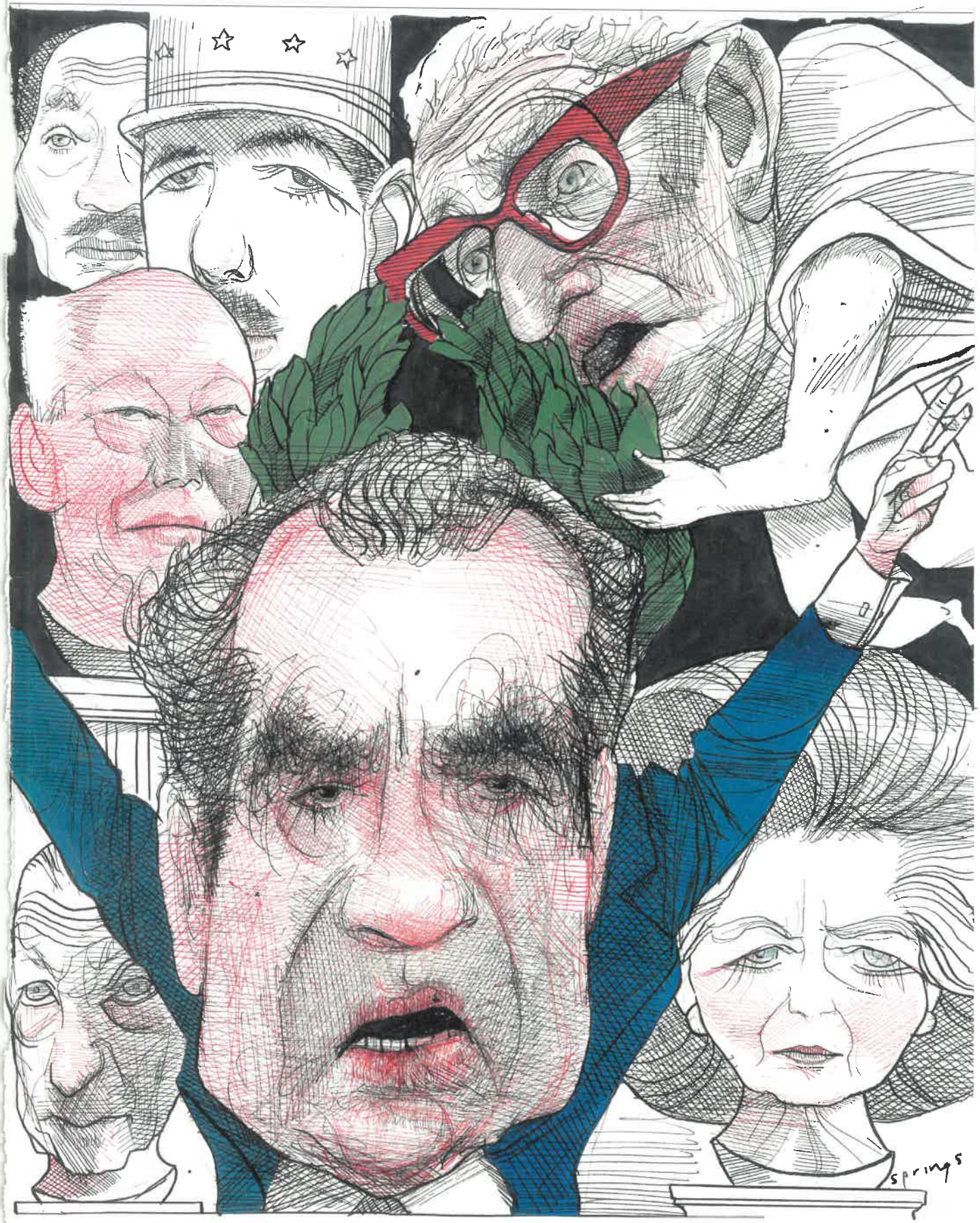
The warning of an apocalypse is repeated in the book's conclusion, which, after a sobering appreciation of the role that cyber weapons and autonomous AI systems already play, points out that "Because the threshold of their use is so low, and their destructive capacity so great, resorting to such weapons — or even their formal threat — may turn a crisis onto a war or transform a limited war into a nuclear one through unintended or uncontrollable escalation."

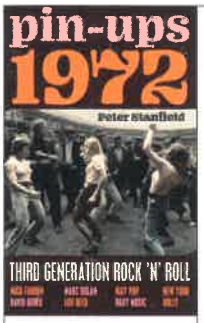
IT IS THROUGH THIS PRISM THAT Kissinger's controversial recent calls for the Ukraine war to end with a return to the *status quo antebellum* — leaving Putin in control of Crimea and the two Donbas breakaway republics — ought be regarded. Kissinger clearly regrets that "the essentially bipolar Cold War distribution of destructive capacities has been replaced by a more complicated and potentially less stable kaleidoscope of high-tech options", some of which he mapped out in his 2021 book *The Age of AI and Our Human Future*, co-authored with Google's former CEO Eric Schmidt. It is to orienteer us through the kaleidoscope of options that we still need leaders.

Three months before his death in 1967, Adenauer asked Kissinger whether leadership was even possible in the modern world. This book is an attempt to answer the question in the affirmative, though Kissinger decries several aspects of the modern world such as our collective attention deficit disorder, wryly observing how "reading a book carefully and engaging with it critically" seems today to be "a counter-cultural act".

Kissinger believes the last great comparable transformation of the world was the Enlightenment, which he writes "replaced the age of faith with repeatable experiments and logical deductions. It is now being supplanted by reliance on algorithms, which work in the opposite direction, offering outcomes in search of an explanation. Exploring these new frontiers will require a committed effort from leaders to narrow, and ideally to close, existing gaps between the worlds of technology, politics, history and philosophy." He argues persuasively that such paragons need to be part-statesman and part-prophet. Joe Biden, anyone? ●

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN SPRINGS


springs



Pin-Ups 1972: Third Generation Rock 'n' Roll
Peter Stanfield
(Reaktion, £15.99)

Irritatingly glib take on a golden year

Barney Hoskyns

ROCK'N'ROLL YEARS are all the rage these days. Ever since Jon Savage published his monumental *1966* (in 2015), the *anni*, particularly the 1970s, have been going like hot cakes. David Browne took 1970, David Hepworth grabbed 1971. Ronald Brownstein laid claim to 1974, while former Orange Juice drummer Steven Daly is — as I write — ring-fencing the tipping-point year of 1975. Perhaps pop historians should bid for other available years: would 1979 be worth more than, say, 1985?

The latest *annum* to be bagged is 1972, which happens to be the year when this reviewer became a bopping consumer of records, magazines and badges, and when he officially saw his first live concert (Lindisfarne and Genesis at Lewisham Town Hall, he cringes to confess). But don't worry, this review won't be a pretext for more wallowing in false nostalgia for the days when we saved up our pocket money for the latest single by Slade or T. Rex. Although just typing that sentence fills me with false nostalgia.

Peter Stanfield's *Pin-Ups 1972* isn't about 1972 *per se*. In fact, the year in question seems rather spuriously bolted on to the hyphenated *Pin-Ups*, named after a David Bowie covers album that, as it happens, came out in 1973. It's about "third generation rock'n'roll", a phrase denoting music made in the slipstream of the Beatles and the Stones and The Who, of Cream and Jimi Hendrix and Led Zeppelin.

The author, who last year published a snappy study of The Who entitled *A Band with Built-In Hate*, is interested in what happened after the Sixties had not simply ended but died as a dream of explosive societal change. Once the original "second-generation" icons were knocking on 30 (having failed to die before they got old), who was there to pick up the reins, and what did they do with the legacy left by the previous decade? To paraphrase the title of George Melly's seminal 1970 book, how did they revolt into new styles?

STANFIELD'S FOCUS IS ON London before, during, and after that year. Wading into the terrain of Simon Reynolds's peerless *Shock and Awe*, the author devotes chapters to Bowie, Marc Bolan, Lou Reed, Iggy Pop, Roxy Music and the New York Dolls — white males all — and ties them loosely together as exemplars of a new sensibility that renounced the Sixties in favour of androgynous flash and teenage anthemics.

His contention is that these figures, most of them half a generation younger than the Beatles and the Stones, were rejecting "rock" as a po-faced late Sixties art form by reconnecting to the original fizz and swagger of Elvis and his fellow Fifties hepcats. Despite their unavoidable immersion in the Sixties — Bolan's warbling Tyrannosaurus Rex songs; Bowie's fey "Memory of a Free Festival" — they seized their opportunity to make a fresh start and create music for the semi-feral children of Britain's "teenage wasteland", or what the great Nik Cohn called "the pubertal avant-garde".

As Bowie put it in "All the Young Dudes", the masterful song he donated to oikish Hereford combo Mott the Hoople: *"My brother's back at home with his Beatles and his Stones/We never got it off on that revolution stuff..."* A genre that galvanised the UK but never gained traction in the more homophobic USA, glam rock was a pop revolt against bogus rock revolutionaries.

Slightly anachronistically, Stanfield's first chapter concerns the hairy and wholly unglamorous Mick Farren, mainstay of London's "rock 'n' roll underground" and the pretty terrible lead singer for the (Social) Deviants. Farren (*left, in the early 70s*) was musically talentless but a terrific rabble-rouser — and a great rock writer. Committed to working-class upheaval, Mick was also in thrall to the big bang of Fifties rock 'n' roll and scornful of anything that smacked of laid-back California (though he ended up living there). Stanfield seems to see him as a transitional figure, one foot in the world of Edgar Broughton's "Out demons, out!" chant, the other in the new milieu of Bowie's dudes and droogs.

DAVID REED ARCHIVE/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

WHICH IS WHERE THE AUTHOR'S key argument kicks in. For *Pin-Ups 1972* really concerns a kind of *retro-futurism*: music and style that harked back to the raw innocence and sexual frenzy of Elvis and friends, but simultaneously pointed forward to a pre-punk sci-fi dystopia. Stanfield is good on Bolan's brief but brilliant turn in the *Top Of The Pops* spotlight — corkscrew-haired Marc was my first televisual crush — and his nakedly ambitious self-reinvention as a pouting, glittery electric warrior. (It's a coincidence but no surprise that Edsel recently released a box set consisting exclusively of T. Rex tracks from, yes, 1972.)

He's less good on the year of Bowie's projected alter ego Ziggy Stardust, and on the ectomorphic alien's patronage of key influences Lou and Iggy. Nor does he have much to say about the art-schooled Roxy Music that wasn't said better in *Shock and Awe* or Michael Bracewell's aptly-titled *Remake/Remodel*. His interpretations of glam style and iconography, with nods to Warhol, Kubrick's *Clockwork Orange*, and Nik Cohn/

There is almost no conveying of what the musicians were like or what drove them

Marc Bolan and T Rex on Top of the Pops, May 25, 1972; advert for the New York Dolls first album; detail from the cover of Guy Peellaert's *Rock Dreams*

RON HOWARD/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES; ESTATE OF GUY PEELLAERT

Guy Peellaert's fabulous book *Rock Dreams*, intertwine with a slightly creepy absorption in porn mags such as *Curious* and *Club International*. Did we really need to see the breasts and pudenda of Roxy cover girl Marilyn Cole or the unidentified "Fuck Girls" [sic] from *Men Only*, especially when women are otherwise barely represented in the book?

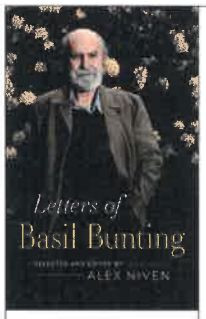
BUT THE REAL PROBLEM WITH *Pin-Ups 1972* is that — for a study of a period that had so much to do with transgressive *fun* — it's so rockademically cerebral and so over-reliant on contemporary critical responses. With Paul Gorman's music-press history *Totally Wired* due out in September, you'd be forgiven for wondering if *Pin-Ups 1972* wasn't more about writers like the *NME*'s Nick Kent or *Melody Maker*'s Roy Hollingworth than about Bolan, Bowie, Ferry and Brian Eno.

There are scores of quotes from reviews and interviews of the time — most less arch than Stanfield's own formulations — yet there's almost no conveying of what the musicians were like or what drove them to, in Bowie's words, "turn and face the strange". The result is often irritatingly glib.

The author does redeem himself with a more coherent chapter about the New York Dolls, an androgynous glam parody of the Rolling Stones whose first album cover almost shocked me when I clapped eyes on it in the Virgin Records shop off Sloane Square. And there's a splendid photo of the Dolls' "brickie-in-eyeliner" bassist Arthur Harold Kane being made up backstage before a gig at Biba's Rainbow Room. But those shows took place in 1973, the year of Iggy's *Raw Power* and Roxy's *For Your Pleasure* as well as the eponymous *New York Dolls*.

And unfortunately, 1973 has already been nabbed by a certain Andrew Grant Jackson. ●

Barney Hoskyns is Editorial Director of *Rock's Backpages*



Letters of Basil Bunting
Selected and edited by Alex Niven (OUP, £35)

"Dear Ezra ... Yours Ever, B Bunting"

Julian Stannard

BUNTING, *AVANTI!* What a pleasure to read these letters. We get six decades' worth, carefully selected, from the 1920s to the 1980s, and any student of twentieth-century literature, or any student of writing, will find much to chew over. Alex Niven is conscious this publication is another piece in the great (often mysterious) Basil Bunting jigsaw puzzle. He argues that "there is still much to do where Bunting scholarship is concerned".

The introduction maps out the critical history since Bunting's death in 1985: Victoria Forde's *The Poetry of Basil Bunting* (1991) and Peter Makin's *Bunting: The Shaping of his Verse* (1992), as well as the important work of Peter Quartermain (*Basil Bunting: A Poet of the North*) and Richard Caddel (*Basil Bunting: A Northern Life*).

More recently the growing Bunting industry has been turbocharged by Don Share's capacious *The Poems of Basil Bunting* (2016) which supersedes *Complete Poems* (2000). An assiduous reader of the letters might wish to have Share's work to hand. Biographies of Bunting, too: Keith Alldritt's rumbunctious *The Poet as Spy: The Life and Wild Times of Basil Bunting* (1998) and Richard Burton's *A Strong Song Tows Us: The Life of Basil Bunting* (2013).

The letters, in part, complement and illuminate these works, but above all , and herein lies the pleasure, they provide us with a voice of a poet whose chequered career reads, at moments, like a cockeyed novel. In a variety of registers, from the high-minded to the demotic, the letters consider (literary material aside) travel, food, restaurants, waiters ("the true glory of Paris"), incarceration, elevators in New York, marriage and war.

Niven's editorship is tactful and unobtrusive. The letters are allowed to sing their own songs, whether plaintive, joyous, droll. We can listen to Bunting, no mean letter-writer, whose address book housed the greats of Anglo-American literature, including Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams, Louis Zukofsky, Harriet Monroe, George Oppen, Allen Ginsberg and Ted Hughes.

Bunting (right) with Allen Ginsberg at the Morden Tower

HE WAS BORN IN Northumberland in 1900. Niven structures the sweep of his long and varied life into three parts: Late Spring (1920-1938), Midway (1939-1963), Revival (1964-1985). Readers with some knowledge of Bunting's career will be able to navigate the poet's transformation from bit-player in the 1930s to the great literary breakthrough of the 1960s.

"Bunting experienced decades of false starts, dead ends, and what might be called serial underachievement," writes Niven. Bunting writes to Pound and Zukofsky in 1934: "Most of my writing is shit, which is one reason why I don't write more ... if you think my poems get shitty ... please say so in no mistakeable phraseology."

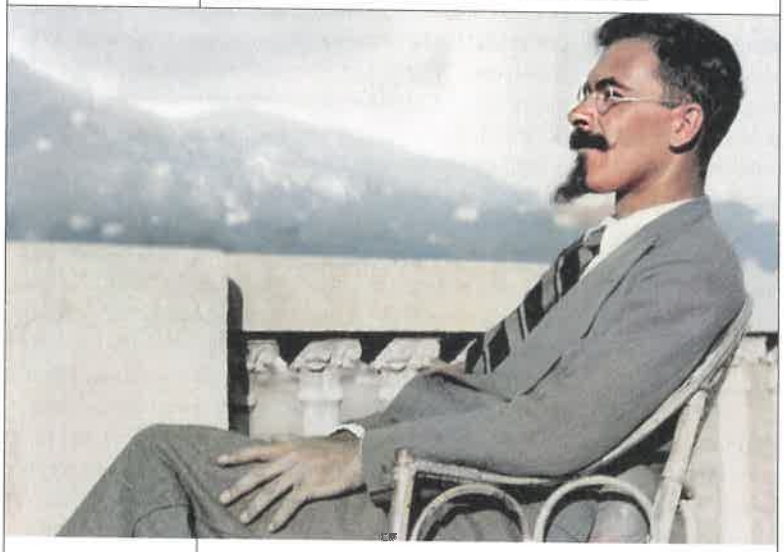
The creation of his masterpiece *Briggflatts*, named after a Quaker Meeting House, is documented in the letters. Published in 1966, it was a resurrection after years of obscurity and tedium at the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*. If Pound had been his "mentor" in the early years (Yeats described Bunting as "one of Ezra's more savage disciples") it was now a boy-poet who became, out of the blue, the catalyst of the later years.

This is a letter to Zukofsky (13 June, 1964) — Bunting's most constant correspondent — "I am writing ... because there is a boy here you can help, who seems to deserve help. He looked me up ... His name is Tom Pickard, his age is 18, and he is a poet." This serendipitous encounter led Bunting to the youthful, counter-cultural poetry scene at Newcastle's now "mythological" Morden Tower and galvanised the ageing poet into writing the epic poem that would transform his life and reputation.

It continues: "You were 18 yourself once, Louis, and you'd managed to get to a university ... He seems to me the only spark of talent I've come across in my own country, and I would hate the spark to go out or go smoky for lack of whatever encouragement I can give."

THE LIFE OF BUNTING is a one of places and in large part the letters reflect this — London, Paris, Berlin, Rapallo, the Canary Islands, New York, Isfahan, Northumberland. In the early years it's a bohemian, impecunious life. Financial worries haunt the letters from the beginning. His life of twists and turns, conflict and significant encounters led, in the 1920s, to his friendship with Pound and two periods in Rapallo — at the Ezuversity — where he forged his modernist credentials. "The 1930s letters to Pound are a seminal document in their own right," Niven argues. Bunting's letter to Pound on 16 December, 1938, which shows the rupture of that

Not a few of Basil Bunting's experiences have a purgatorial quality, but these are punctuated with Edenic interludes



Bunting as a young man

friendship on the eve of war, commands attention. Bunting writes from New York, having discovered Zukofsky had been subject to Pound's antisemitism. "Dear Ezra," it begins: "... I wish I were not as much indebted to you as I am ... Every anti-semitism, anti-niggerism, anti-moorism, that I can recall in history was base, had its foundations in the meanest kind of envy and greed. It makes me sick to see you covering yourself in that filth ... To spue out anti-semite bile in a letter to Louis ... is not a mere lapse of taste: it is uncommonly close to what has got to be called the behaviour of a skunk." Although letterwriting resumed after the war, the rock was split.

Not a few of Bunting's experiences have a purgatorial quality but these are punctuated with Edenic interludes. Imprisoned during the First World War, Bunting had "a good war" in the second. His interest in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* led eventually to Persia (1942-52). On 18 July, 1945, now vice-consul of Isfahan, he is writing to the artist Karl Drerup: "My lawn is studded with bright flowers, just like a Persian brocade; and the impossible mountains you see in the background of the miniatures actually exist just beyond the town ... Isfahan is so full of gardens that from a little distance you would think the minarets rose out of a forest."

The last poignant letter in the book — 20 March, 1985 — was written weeks before his death, to Massimo Bacigalupo on the Italian Riviera, whose father was Pound's doctor. The letter is full of literary observations and memories and characteristically there are references to Pound. Rapallo must have seemed impossibly distant. "My age," Bunting says, "prohibits me from travelling. Old men are really disgusting to themselves. ... I shall not revisit Italy ... Snow and cold winds still imprison me. I survive with whisky's help. *Auguri*. B." ●

Julian Stannard is the author of *Basil Bunting* (Liverpool University Press, 2013)

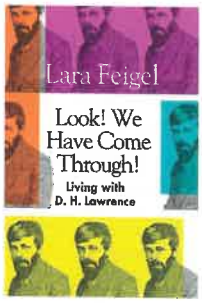
PUBLIC DOMAIN (2)

A sharp, shrewd look at Lawrence

Paul Dean

LOOK! WE HAVE COME THROUGH! was a collection of poems D.H. Lawrence published in 1917 to celebrate the early years of his relationship with Frieda Weekley. In borrowing the title, Lara Feigel marks her survival of lockdown, isolated in the Oxfordshire countryside with her partner and children, an experience which allowed her to immerse herself in Lawrence, on whom she had already agreed to write a book.

Early fears that this will be another example of misappropriating literature for purposes of self-help prove to be thankfully short-lived. The autobiographical sections are outweighed by some of the sharpest, shrewdest discussions of Lawrence I have seen for a long time.



Look! We Have Come Through! Living with D. H. Lawrence
Lara Feigel
(Bloomsbury, £20)

Each of Feigel's eight chapters homes in on a major topic, and she has fresh things to say in every case, drawing examples from the whole range of Lawrence's writing.

Lawrence himself hated being locked down, whether to a person, a place, or (most of all) an idea. Single-issue commentary will never do him justice — too much of his work will be overlooked — but the history of Lawrence criticism, from F.R. Leavis to Kate Millett to Angela Carter (who recruited Lawrence as "a sister") is adversarial. Feigel's strength is that she sees that "Lawrence's powers of affirmation came out of his contradictions".

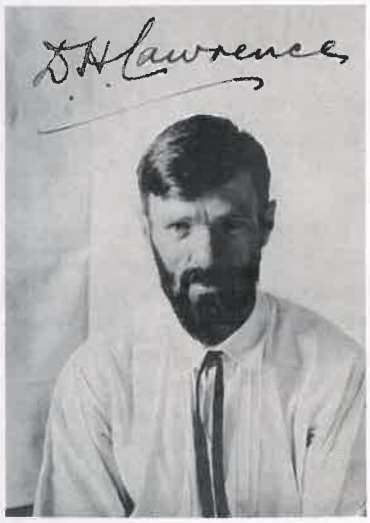
Thus, he saw consciousness as both destructive (the imposition of coercive willpower) and illuminating (liberating the self for full expression). Lawrence the anti-democrat and admirer of strong leadership, preferably exercised by himself, was also the Lawrence who dreamed of Rananim, the Utopian community of fellow idealists. Lawrence the nomad was also Bert of Eastwood, who never psychologically left home.

Similarly with his symbols. The rainbow, bridging earth and sky, roots the transcendent in the everyday, while the phoenix, his personal mascot, fuses death and rebirth. His was a dialectical mind, and he requires, Feigel believes, "a new way of reading", which will hold oppositions in tension.

Even Lawrence's detractors admit that he wrote bril-

Paul Dean is a freelance critic who lives in Oxford

Each chapter homes in on a major topic and Feigel has something fresh to say in every case



liantly about the natural world, landscape and the seasons, and encounters between people and animals. He insists on the mystery of the non-human, its indifference to us. Feigel suspects he would have hated Extinction Rebellion and ecology, simplistic moral systems which, in her view, exclude "the turbulence, the vortex of intellectual action that comes from reading Lawrence". He hankered after the primitive, yet his vision of human potential, with its disregard of the conventional, the outworn, and the restrictive, is radically modern.

Nowhere are there more traps for the unwary than in Lawrence's treatment of sex. For many, this is his claim to fame — or notoriety. Yet, Feigel warns, "all his reputations are false". Once again, his ideas oscillate. In his essays he indulges in crude patriarchal swaggering which his fiction belies. Sex is a struggle for dominance, yet also a supreme mutual gift, the annihilation yet the renewal of the self, the ultimate assertion of will — "sex in the head" as he called it — yet the defeat of will by blind instinct.

Feigel analyses the movement of his prose in love scenes, the surge and relapse of feeling animating the sentence rhythms, powered by "something much stranger and more diffuse" than erotic arousal. Male-male relationships, too, are rendered with such lyricism that many have discerned homosexual overtones, but Lawrence is modern, again, in his resistance to labels.

His idealising of his mother was a psychological obstacle to independence from which Frieda liberated him, and his portrayals of marriage are remarkable for their insight into the checks and balances, the struggle for equilibrium involved. Feigel sees how Frieda was necessary to Lawrence for her "capacity to enrage and disturb him", to keep him "unsure of himself", to mock his absurdities, preventing him from becoming a soapbox demagogue.

Feigel's chapter "Parenthood" wrestles with serious difficulties. Lawrence wrote about parenting and childhood with piercing clarity, above all in *The Rainbow*, yet his own upbringing was conflicted, and he and Frieda had no children (he may have suffered from impotence). Lawrence's attitude to Frieda's longing to see her children, estranged from her by divorce, amounted to cruelty. He refused to understand or sympathise with her distress, and his conviction that the children of bad marriages were themselves corrupt in some way — a view he never applied to himself — is hateful.

His miraculous touch when creating fictional children comes from a separate part of his mind. Feigel is understandably angered by Lawrence's hostility and callousness (but also by Ernest Weekley's manipulative use of the children to punish Frieda). Her verdict that he was "a feminist himself when it came to motherhood" seems like special pleading.

LAWRENCE WAS BROUGHT UP AS a Congregationalist. He rejected creeds and doctrines but his writing slips effortlessly, chameleon-like, into biblical diction and cadence. This can produce dazzling prose (as in *The Rainbow*) or unreadable nonsense (as in *The Plumed Serpent*). As an adult he still maintained that the hymns he sang in chapel "mean to me almost more than the finest poetry". Like Blake, whom he most resembles in this, he invented his own religion. Feigel's diagnosis that Jesus was "too disembodied in his spirituality" to satisfy Lawrence is surely correct; we have only to read the late story "The Man Who Died", in which Jesus is resurrected to sexual as well as physical life, to see that.

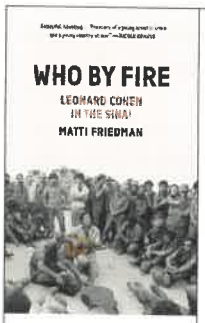
The fundamental religious conviction is that of Tom Brangwen under the stars: "he knew that he did not belong to himself". Neither the human race nor the universe is self-explanatory; the cycle of the seasons is religious in its rhythms. Lawrence had no patience with Buddhism, hilariously exclaiming when shown images of the Buddha, "I wish he would stand up," but responded to Hinduism with its principle of creative destruction.

In the ancient Etruscans, in Mexican culture, in Ceylon, he had sensed a primitive power which made European pseudo-sophistication look tawdry and hollow. In "On Being Religious" (1923), he imagined God constantly on the move, laughing to see worshippers looking for him in the wrong places.

POST-PANDEMIC RHETORIC has had its apocalyptic side. Lawrence would have warmed to that; he loved to imagine that the end was nigh. Yet, as Feigel says, although his last book was *Apocalypse*, a typically innovative take on the Book of Revelation, his last novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, was cataclysmic, pointing beyond upheaval to renewal. "Ours is a tragic age", it opens, and tragedy can be cathartic, not purely destructive.

Feigel sees the novel's ending as nearer to the pattern of comedy, "its characters released out into the world alive and ready for it", like her and her family as they emerge from isolation. To be able to meet the world unillusioned but undismayed is what Lawrence did for Lara Feigel, and it is what she hopes he can do for us as a result of her bracing and honest book. ●

CULTURE CLUB/GETTY IMAGES



Who By Fire: Leonard Cohen in the Sinai
Matti Friedman
(Spiegel & Grau, £19.99)

Wartime hallelujah

Zachary Hardman

IN 1973, LEONARD COHEN was on the Greek island of Hydra with his partner, Suzanne Elrod, and their newborn son. The poet and novelist had found fame as a singer-songwriter in the late 1960s, casting a brooding shadow over the Summer of Love. By now, though, he was depressed; almost 40, unhappy in quiet domesticity and in the midst of a creative malaise. "I feel like I want to shut up," he told an interviewer.

Across the Mediterranean, an Arab coalition, led by Egypt and Syria, swept into Israel. It was Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, and the country was taken by surprise. The defence minister, Moshe Dayan, full of hubris after Israel's victory in the 1967 Six Day War, warned his generals of the imminent fall of the Third Temple, by which he meant the state of Israel itself.

Cohen singing with Israeli musician Matti Caspi. Ariel Sharon is on Cohen's right

Moved to action, like so many sympathetic Jews, Cohen resolved to "stop Egypt's bullet". It's not clear how he intended to do it. Arriving in what he called his "myth-home", he couldn't speak the language, let alone fire a gun. A group of musicians, bound for the frontline, spotted him in a Tel Aviv café and suggested he join their troupe. Cohen, bereft of a guitar, reluctantly agreed.

They arrived in the Sinai desert, land of the biblical book of Exodus, where the fighting was fierce. There, Cohen, dressed in military fatigues, sang his desperate, melancholic songs, under the glow of headlights, to soldiers returned from, or headed to, battle.

Some of them would recall it as a "foundational event", like "Moses hearing the voice". For Cohen, it was a foundational event, too. Within days, he was writing new songs. By the time he returned home, he was ready to record an album.

Still, in the years after, he was reluctant to speak about the experience. He later claimed songs written for his Israeli "brothers" were, in fact, written for both sides. In Israel, however, the story continues to be repeated each year, like a folk myth.

MATTI FRIEDMAN HAS WRITTEN a number of books weaving together little-known stories in Israeli history. *Who By Fire* is his latest addition to the tapestry. It relies on a half-finished Cohen manuscript, and the accounts of Israeli soldiers, to tell the story. In doing so, he broadens both our understanding of Leonard Cohen the artist and the Yom Kippur War itself.

His protagonists are worthy of any great tale: the leader of an elite unit named the Almond Reconnaissance, "The Lion of the Desert" General Ariel Sharon, Hercules transport planes and a warship named Bathsheba. Cohen drifts through the narrative, like a mirage. He appears to soldiers in moments of despair. He becomes a talismanic figure, his voice transmuted, as he sings in "Lover, Lover, Lover" into a "shield against the enemy".

Friedman believes this story can tell us something about the nature of artistic inspiration. That it so often asserts itself in the face of "inhuman events". War is, after all, the inspiration for some of the earliest works of literature, such as the *Iliad*. It inspired Goya's *Disasters of War* and Picasso's *Guernica*. And it launched the careers of Ernest Hemingway and Ernst Jünger. No doubt the war in Ukraine will one day inspire artists of its own.

That war should inspire art is a contradiction in terms. In its destructiveness, war is the opposite of creation. But it is perhaps this contradiction that makes war, for so many artists, a source of creativity. Just as knowing sadness means we can know joy, a proximity to death gives the artist a better understanding of what it means to be alive. This heightening of experience leads to an altered state of consciousness, which is the wellspring of inspiration.

Cohen was explicit. "War is wonderful," he said. He compared the experience to what a friend told him about LSD: "They'll never stamp it out." There was a meditative, religious quality to the experience, too. "[In war] every single gesture is precise, every effort is at its maximum," he says. While among fellow soldiers there is a feeling of "kinship" and "devotion".

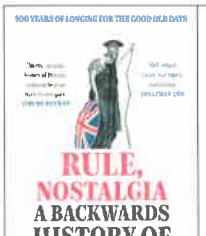
COHEN WOULD LATER REFLECT that he went to Israel hoping to find a "contradiction" about his own beliefs. Drinking cognac with Ariel Sharon, he confides to his journal that he wants the general's job. He is horrified by his relief when he is told a group of dying soldiers are, in fact, Egyptians, not Israelis. "There is blood on your hands," he writes.

Cohen certainly discovered something in the desert. He left Israel with the illumination that the "contradiction" within himself had, in fact, been there all along. As he sings in "There is a War," recorded in 1974, the human psyche is engaged in an unremitting war of contradictory forces, like "man and woman", "left and right", "odd and even". The only solution is to "get in it" and "pick up your tiny burden".

So, Cohen returned to Hydra, to his partner and child and resolved to "tend his little garden" again. ●

SCREENGRAB

Zachary Hardman is a writer at *The Draft*



Rule Nostalgia: A Backwards History of Britain
Hannah Rose Woods (Ebury, £20)

Nostalgia *is* what it used to be

Michael Ledger-Lomas

ON HOLIDAY, I USED TO find *Nostalgie* FM the perfect accompaniment to a drive through the Loire Valley. A non-stop blend of largely French hits from the sixties to the eighties, it was both a caution against and a potent agent of nostalgia. Most of the songs from this "golden age" turned out to be quite naff, but as the châteaux rolled by, the torch songs of Alain Souchon instilled a yearning for a past in which I had never lived.

Indulging in pained regret for lost times might seem a harmless pleasure, but Hannah Rose Woods is here to warn it has become a pathological "fixation". The Right, she argues, has "weaponised" nostalgia, tapping "inchoate yearnings about fading pride and glory" to fuel hatred against historians who are simply "putting the facts back in" to the national "storybook".

Apparently, the first cure for this "peculiarly English affliction" involves refuting errors and egregious simplifications in Tory talk about the national past. Woods is an inveterate Tweeter and her *Rule, Nostalgia* often works like a book-length version of the "Hi, historian here" threads that infest that medium.

The Government exhorted people to get through Covid by showing the Blitz spirit, but historians know German bombing caused as much fear and resentment as pride and resolve. Britons were supposed to Keep Calm and Carry On, "but this was a fantasy", Woods writes, because the 1940s poster with that motto never entered circulation. The tea towels lied to us.

More than 2 million posters were printed, but they were never used; Stuart Manley of Barter Books in Alnwick found one in a box of books and his wife ,Mary put it up by the till. The rest is history

WOODS IS MORE PRODUCTIVE when she probes nostalgia as a cluster of emotions, rather than condemning it as a set of errors. For like all emotions, it can be usefully historicised. This insight shapes the basic structure and approach of the book, which is more ironic than irate. Our times seem to be gripped by nostalgia for the days before yesterday, but the sixties, seventies and eighties abounded with yearning for the simplicities of the Second World War.

The thirties and forties were, in turn, full of voices lamenting what one of Orwell's heroes called the "newness of everything", pining for the sun-dappled afternoons of Edwardian England. The Edwardians themselves lamented the lost certainties of the high Victorian age and fretted that rural tranquility was on the wane. And so on. Woods turns the periods of our history into Russian dolls of nostalgia, each nested within the other.

It is an engaging literary device which palls as succeeding chapters ask readers to re-enact their surprise that apparently stable times were consumed with anxiety about losing touch with tradition. Woods says the "calmly elegant Georgian heyday" fretted about whether Britain should go global or remain a tight little island, while it would be a "hard sell" to claim that the age of the Reformation and the Civil War was an "age of contentment and stability". Well, quite.

The further Woods progresses away from the "rancid Englishness" of the present, the more forgiving she becomes of nostalgia — or at least of wistful absorption in the past, which is not quite the same thing. She rightly sees that nostalgia has generally not been an obstacle to rapid social change — what bolder Victorians would have called "progress" — but has offered psychological compensation for them.

JOHANNES HOFER COINED THE WORD NOSTALGIA in 1688 to describe the chronic homesickness of Swiss soldiers for their mountain home. That etymology is important to Woods, informing perception that nostalgia has often raged most strongly among those who have moved away in service of the economy or the state: the Edwardian obsession with the lost worlds of childhood was marked among people who roved for a living.

In one of many arresting vignettes, Woods recounts the writer Walford Graham Robertson's shock at discovering soldiers flocked to his 1907 play *Pinkie and the Fairies*. It was "Aldershot" in the stalls and there was not a dry eye in the house as moustachioed men of empire wept as the fairies bid farewell to their child friends. She just as deftly makes the ironic point that it is usually technological changes that fuel nostalgia. People in interwar Britain fumed that ribbon development, roadside advertisers and messy picnickers were destroying the countryside, but the cult of rural old England owed

BAILEY-COOPER PHOTOGRAPHY/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Although Woods presents nostalgia as an English vice, her book shows that British people have usually tempered and often condemned its excesses

Elise Craven, child actress and dancer, acting in *Pinkie and the Fairies;* an advert for a Shell Guide

ULLSTEIN BILD VIA GETTY IMAGES

much to the automobile guides put out by Shell.

ALTHOUGH WOODS PRESENTS NOSTALGIA as an English vice, her book shows that British people have usually tempered and often condemned its excesses. She follows the Cambridge historian Peter Mandler in seeing modern Britons as a generally confident, firmly urban and cosmopolitan people who rarely wished to keep their heritage in aspic.

She shows that Victorian working-class autobiographers did not regret the upheavals they lived through. Looking back on his life in 1880, one wrote that it would be a "misanthrope indeed who would wish the old days or customs back again". There were plangent pastoralists at that time, but few thoroughly reactionary ones.

Walter Scott's *Waverley* novels fuelled the wistful romanticism of the early nineteenth century, but Abbotsford, the house he built with their proceeds, was the first in Scotland with gas lighting. For every Kenneth Grahame, who lined up Moley and Badger against weasel modernity in *The Wind in the Willows*, there was an Edward Carpenter, who fled the city for a Sheffield smallholding, the better to pursue his enthusiasms for vegetarianism and al fresco sex.

Woods appreciates impresarios who found social democratic visions of community in the British past, rather than rum and trumpet narratives. She likes the early Victorian radicals who conjured up a mythical, pre-capitalist Olden Time of comfy manor houses and roast beef in which the English people were united. She prefers popular historians, such as the interwar Quennells, Marjorie and C.H.B., whose rather dull *History of Everyday Things* avoided politics to explore looms and ploughs, rather than Whiggish blowhards like Macaulay.

And so there is "nothing new about current debates about history": in every period, you will find not only nostalgics but firebrands calling for a break with the past. Woods shows that many of the ideologues whose certainties proofed them against nostalgia were Tories. Mrs Thatcher's environment secretary Nick Ridley lambasted rural preservationists as "pseudo-Marxists" harming the economic interests of the countryside.

When the Lady herself went misty-eyed over the Grantham of her youth and banged on about "Victorian values", she did so not just because they were old, but because they were "perennial values" which could transform the present. That leads Woods to the subtle point that sometimes it is the "good guys" who are the nostalgics: Remainiacs sighing for French cheese after the Brexit vote and Corbynistas yearning for the days of Aneurin Bevan.

IT SEEMS LIKE ONLY yesterday that parodies of centrist commentary kept telling us to "Read some effing Orwell". Woods belongs to a cohort of millennial historians who insist their Twitter foes should read some effing history. Were the people who dragged Colston's statue into Bristol harbour so different to the Cromwellians who poked out stained glass windows of saints?

Leaving aside the question of whether these are comparable forms of iconoclasm, it overrates what historians can achieve. In her conclusion, Woods cites the young Herbert Butterfield on the duty of academic historians insist upon the strangeness of the past. But she is too quick to dismiss the older Butterfield's recognition that societies stubbornly require stories that historians insist are simple or wrong — not least because she overlooks the profound, if crabbed religious faith which led him to it.

Even if revisionism could conquer the world as well as the internet, would getting Britons to close their storybook really solve Britain's problems? Woods occasionally grants that nostalgia is a "universal human impulse", which makes her thesis that it is a uniquely dangerous British phenomenon curiously parochial.

If Second World War triumphalism caused Britain's lamentable toll of Covid deaths, then what caused Germany's? Does Mark Francois's myth-making command wider social acceptance than Marine Le Pen's? As Butterfield might have remarked, the urge to snap moral judgements is no less an enemy to historical understanding than the hankering to be at home in the past. ●

Michael Ledger-Lomas is a historian and author of *Queen Victoria: This Thorny Crown* (2021)

Henrietta Maria: Conspirator, Warrior, Phoenix Queen
Leanda de Lisle (Chatto & Windus, £25)

The Critic Books

The "Popish brat of France" reassessed

Miranda Malins

IN JANUARY 1640, the English court assembled in a vast temporary room beside the Banqueting House in Whitehall to watch a dream unfold. At a safe distance from Rubens's newly painted ceiling, candlelight flickered on the silver breeches and plumed helmet of Charles I as he climbed the craggy rocks of discord to reach a golden throne.

His French queen, Henrietta Maria — dressed by Inigo Jones in carnation red-pink and silver, a helmet on her head and sword at her side — then appeared from a heavenly cloud bursting through rays of light to be enthroned at his side and bring harmony to his fractious kingdom. Three years later the same queen was on the run from Parliament's forces, on one night forced to lie in a ditch clutching her dog for two hours as bullets whistled over her head.

Six years after that, it was the king's turn to face the music at the Banqueting House — not now the exquisite notes of William Davenant's masque but the swish of the executioner's axe and groans of the crowd.

This is the thrilling story narrated by Leanda de Lisle in her new book *Henrietta Maria*, in which the queen she describes as "a warrior and a wit" plays the starring role. But this is much more than an adventure story: it is a revisionist life of one of the most compelling and controversial women in British history: a queen who has been loathed or, perhaps worse, written out of the tumultuous decades of the mid-seventeenth century.

Demonised for her perceived part in the Civil Wars, Henrietta Maria, dubbed the "Popish brat of France", has suffered much misogyny and bigotry over the centuries. But in Leanda de Lisle she has found a skilled champion determined to tell "the story of her life from her point of view".

THAT STORY BEGINS IN THE French court, where the six-month-old princess Henrietta Maria lost her father, the great Bourbon king Henry IV, to an assassin's knife and was raised by her formidable mother, Queen Marie de' Medici. Henrietta Maria's upbringing within a great dynasty ruling over a country riven by religious violence is crucial to understanding her outlook; de Lisle grounds her firmly in Europe's "society of princes".

Membership of this international elite was open to both sexes and Marie raised her daughter to believe women could and should wield power on earth, exercising a civilising influence over men's aggression, in reflection of the Virgin Mary's power in heaven.

The mission Marie set for Henrietta Maria when she married Charles I was as impossible as it was ambitious. She was to dedicate herself wholly to her new country and forget her old one (though also cementing the ties between the two nations despite their contrasting interests); obey her husband in all things (except in the paramount area of religion, as he was a Protestant); and protect the persecuted Catholics of England who shared her faith (but not forget the Protestant majority of her new subjects). This mission would shape Henrietta Maria's life and her attempts to fulfil it cement her place as one of the most reviled queen consorts in British history.

Hers was an uphill task from the start. Married life was challenging, particularly in the early years, as Henrietta Maria had to compete with the powerful Duke of Buckingham for Charles's attention and affections. There were clashes over her large French retinue, how and where she could worship and the king's treatment of Catholics — all of which hardened many of the queen's new subjects against her.

Still, there was some joy in these "halcyon days" once the royal couple established a deep love and trust for one another. While Charles ruled without Parliament, the charming and witty Henrietta Maria enjoyed becoming a mother and living a gilded life of high fashion and culture, architecture and gardening, masques and merriment.

THE SUBSEQUENT SLIDE INTO CIVIL WAR is well known, but the reality of Henrietta Maria's part in it is not. Far from driving her husband towards Catholicism and egging him on in his conflict with Parliament, Henrietta Maria led the anti-Spanish faction at court — bringing her into alliance with the Protestant cause abroad and the supporters of the parliamentary cause at home.

Though she supported Charles vigorously once the conflict began, hers was a pragmatic and conciliatory voice, often urging the king to reach accommodation with his opponents in the coming years. The daughter of Henry IV, who had converted to Catholicism to win his crown declaring "Paris is worth a mass", was a more flexible and intuitive politician than her husband.

She was also his staunchest lieutenant in the field, braving the bounty effectively placed on her head by Parliament to cross in and out of England, enduring hardship and danger to raise money and troops for the king. De Lisle reinserts Henrietta Maria fully into this military role, recreating the self-styled warrior queen "she-majesty Generalissima", who rode at the head of the "Queen's Army", issued her own battle commands (sometimes in express contradiction to those of her husband) and endured the doubly dangerous experience of giving birth while fleeing from enemy troops.

Even after the royalist cause was lost and the king executed, Henrietta Maria retained her remarkable

"Between you and me..."

Guildford branch of Waitrose (I gather he was forced to tour Blighty by Mr Kenwright) stirred long dormant fanboy emotions. Digging out my "I Shot JR!" badge back home, a subsequent attempt to explain to the nephew just what this handsome fellow meant to us all those years ago met with the kind of blank disinterest one's come to expect from cold-hearted millennials.

Irons' steed

DEPARTING A WEST END establishment following a particularly sociable evening, I was alarmed to only narrowly miss being mowed down by a passing motorcyclist bearing an uncanny resemblance to Jeremy Irons.

After performing an impressive body swerve to avoid being slain by this mechanical monstrosity, my resulting fall was mercifully cushioned by nearby bin bags. While my insistence on laying blame at Jeremy's door was dismissed by cynics choosing to highlight my late hour condition, one's version of events was later verified when ruddy Irons was pictured in the newspapers hurtling through Haymarket on the beastly contraption!

Having had my own professional endeavours adversely affected by starry Jeremy's on-set whims down the decades, the thought of being robbed of one's near-prime years by this unhinged dandy is too much to bear.

◆ Hats off to the Reverend Richard Coles, who, since leaving his flock in the East Midlands, has chosen to relentlessly publicise himself across media outlets with renewed gusto. With a timely anecdote to suit every occasion, not to mention an admirable capacity for celebrity name-dropping, we at last have in Coles a welcome successor to that ageing show-off Gyles Brandreth, whose status as England's number one self-promoter went unrivalled for too long.

★ ONGOING HOSTILITIES over at the Actors' Benevolent Fund led to out of favour thespians recently being barred entry to a meeting, with a doorman reportedly given "photographs" of the old dears to keep them at bay! Credit, surely, to the ancient troupers still managing to vaguely resemble long-ago publicity shots?

AFTER hearing the pesky nephew sabotage his vowels one time too many, I recently snapped, announcing I'd no longer tolerate having a respectable and costly upbringing disguised in such a ludicrous manner.

Should the boy not desist from this faux pronunciation, I've warned he risks amounting to nothing more than a BBC One continuity announcer.

◆ Recalling his abrupt departure from *Doctor Who* after just one series, angry northerner Christopher Eccleston emotionally claims he was "blacklisted" by the programme's hierarchy, not least current showrunner Russell T Davies.

One can't help sensing the unnervingly perky Mr Davies is a more formidable foe behind the scenes than those Daleks and Cybermen combined.

★ REVELLING IN ELDERLY FAME, hammy Dundonian Brian Cox was overheard excitedly telling Hollywood star Samuel L Jackson that they could now charge fans to hear them deliver their respective characters' trademark expletives. After the American politely pointed out such an enterprise would be unseemly, Brian sensibly declined to add that he was already bellowing "fuck off!" to his own fans for a tasteful £579 a time.

WELL done to Hugh Bonneville for courageously coming clean in the press and finally admitting* Downton Abbey*'s past its sell-by date. Further kudos to Hugh for hastily adding a decent payday will see him back as the Earl of Grantham pronto.

★ HAVING PREVIOUSLY taken time to highlight the folly of still booking Brian Blessed for "quirky" daytime telly slots as he approaches his 90th year, one couldn't help feeling vindicated following a particularly disastrous appearance by the loony boomer.

Shouting in largely incoherent fashion down a telephone line (I just about made out the oft-repeated fib about Her Majesty being his biggest fan), an attempt by anxious hosts to bring the excruciating episode to a belated close resulted in Brian blurting out: "Rotten pigs!"

A lesson finally learnt? ●

The vast plight of the Proms

THIS SUMMER'S BBC PROMS will be the last festival of British orchestras as we know them. This is not due to Brexit, Covid, Ukraine, inflation, the gas squeeze or any other headline. It is the consequence of half a century of mismanagement and mental indolence on the part of safe-seat executive suits who turned a Nelsonian blind eye to the gathering storm. Well, it's all over now.

The death sentence was delivered by the BBC's director general, Tim Davie (*right*), in a statement terminating BBC Four, which televises most of the Proms, and urging the BBC's six orchestras in London, Manchester, Scotland and Wales to look for "alternative sources of income where possible." The insincerity of that suggestion is on a par with Vladimir Putin's "special measures" in Ukraine.

There is no "where possible" — as Davie, a former boss of BBC music and radio, is well aware. Private cash for concerts has become scarce and BBC orchestras have no brand to sell apart from the big one — the GazProm Last Night of the Proms. Davie knows what lies ahead for his orchestras: oblivion. All he can do is soften the pill and spread the blame. The party's over.

NO-ONE CAN SAY THEY did not see this coming. Sixty years ago the Machiavellian lawyer, Arnold Goodman, proposed that three London orchestras should merge into a super-philharmonic to rival Berlin and Vienna. Goodman, who was head of the Arts Council and legal adviser to two prime ministers, got his way on most things. But here he could not overcome royal patrons of orchestras who would no sooner merge their bands than stamp on the Queen's corgis. The super-orchestra never got on stage and stagnation set in.

In 1980 the BBC attempted to wind down some of its underused regional orchestras. The ensuing national strike by musicians shut down the Proms and cost the unassuming head of music his career. No BBC music man has ever confronted the dragon since. BBC orchestras are a protected species with no specific purpose.

So peripheral have they become to the corporation's general output that the drama department commissions film tracks from ensembles in Munich and Prague while BBC orchestras sit idle at home.

THERE OUGHT TO BE someone who can join up the dots, but the issue is complicated by split funding. The BBC pays the wages of its own orchestras while the Arts Council gives Government support to the rest. The result is a map of inequality. London has nine big orchestras — three BBC, four Arts Council and two opera houses. Manchester has the BBC Philharmonic, plus the Arts Council-backed Hallé and Camerata, with a Liverpool Philharmonic down the road. Meanwhile cities the size of Leeds, Sheffield, Nottingham, Southampton and Bristol have no orchestra at all. Absurd? I couldn't possibly comment.

DAVIE KNOWS OBLIVION LIES AHEAD FOR THE BBC ORCHESTRAS: ALL HE CAN DO IS SPREAD THE BLAME

Like petty princelings under the Raj, the BBC and Arts Council have refused to discuss cross-city cooperation. Hopes rose when an Arts Council bureaucrat, Alan Davey, became head of the BBC's classical music, but not for long. Like the doctrinally flexible Vicar of Bray, Davey served first one camp, then the other, without changing his dog-collar. The BBC orchestras have first call on broadcast concerts. I was once accosted in the Broadcasting House lobby by a regional orchestra manager, crying, "Who do I have to fuck round here to get one of my concerts on Radio 3?"

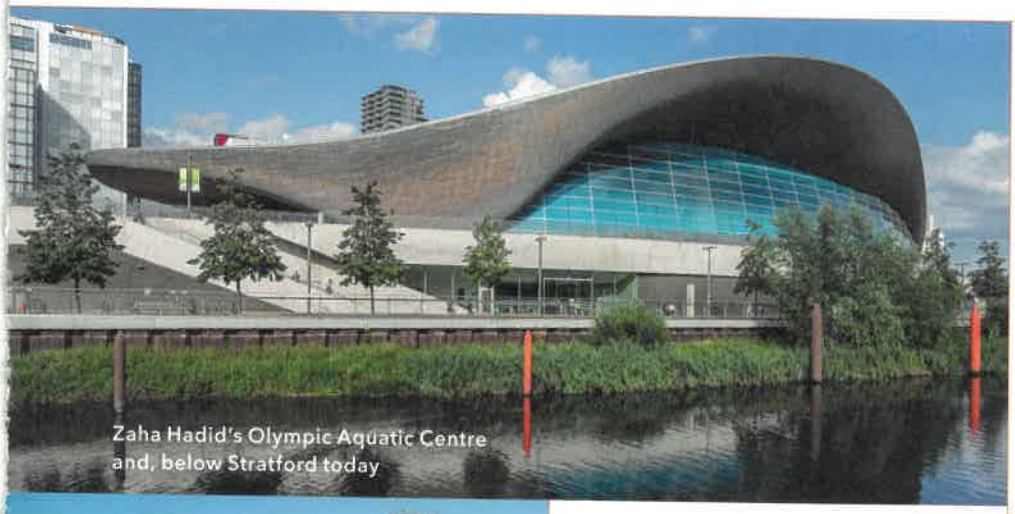
The BBC Symphony Orchestra

ABROAD, RADIO ORCHESTRAS adapted to a changed environment where families no longer gather in the sitting-room after dinner for the Friday night concert. Germany, post-unification, cut its orchestras from 180 to 130. There was very little fuss except in Stuttgart where the radio and town orchestras were roughly equal and neither agreed to budge.

In Scandinavia, radio orchestras openly compete with others to an extent where, in Stockholm and Copenhagen, the radio ensemble is considered superior to the royal philharmonic. The Swedish conductor, Herbert Blomstedt, mused recently that radio orchestras offer a purer form of music-making, unpolluted by operatic distractions. The Danish radio orchestra, which he once led, was furnished by the brewers Carlsberg and Tuborg with Stradivarius instruments. No small beer.

British broadcasting, however, allowed orchestras to ossify, shielded by unalloyed BBC propaganda that it is (and they are) "the best in the world". The reckoning has now arrived.

CANETTY CLARKE/BBC



Zaha Hadid's Olympic Aquatic Centre and, below Stratford today

MICKEY LEE/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; NATHANIEL NOIR/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

River Lea. Since these are the two most prominent current approaches to urban planning, it is worth comparing the relative success of the two.

Olympic Park was developed through what I think of as the "big blob" approach. This involved commissioning a small number of big-name architects – including Zaha Hadid, Michael Hopkins of Hopkins Architects and Ken Shuttleworth of Make – to design jumbo projects which would give the park a sense of architectural authority, following the model of the Guggenheim Bilbao, which has hypnotised city planners everywhere.

It wasn't a bad idea. I still regard Hadid's Aquatics Centre as one of her best buildings, beautifully and aggressively curvaceous, although one might regret that a building which was originally planned to cost £75 million ended up costing £269 million. The Hopkins's Velodrome, now called the Lee Valley VeloPark, is more coolly elegant, a predominantly wooden cylinder, its detail designed by Mike Taylor, a Hopkins partner who is a keen cyclist.

THE SAME APPROACH WAS applied to Stratford, the neighbouring town, which at the time was pretty downtrodden with not much to recommend it, apart from a big indoor shopping centre much admired by Ian Nairn for its preservation of working-class culture.

Stratford suddenly grew a series of high-rise apartment blocks, designed by Stock Woolstencroft. They belong to a nondescript international style, which would be equally at home in Barcelona, which hosted the Olympics 30 years ago. Many of the people who bought these flats lived in China, which didn't do much to help the housing crisis.

Pumping money into these essentially public projects helped to attract the Westfield Group — which had previously opened a huge shopping mall, Westfield, in west London — to open an equivalent in Stratford, now said to be one of the most profitable in Europe.

The development of Stratford must be regarded as a big success, if judged on its own terms. It has made Stratford into a much more glitzy area which is now home to a mass of high-rise buildings, an

IF ONE WANTS LONDON TO BECOME A BOOMTOWN, THEN STRATFORD IS A GOOD MODEL OF HOW TO DO IT

equivalent to other recently-developed satellites of London, including Battersea, Nine Elms and Croydon. The Olympic Village has been turned into boulevards of expensive housing. If one wants London to become a boomtown, then Stratford is a good model of how to do it.

BUT IT IS WORTH COMPARING its development to what has happened on the other side of the River Lea where there was an existing, semi-industrial neighbourhood, Hackney Wick, which long been known for its collection of light industrial sheds where new forms of dyestuff and petrochemicals were developed in the late nineteenth century and, since the 1970s, which have housed artists' studios.

There was an existing infrastructure, which the planners chose to develop more organically, keeping some of the industrial buildings on the River Lea (*below*) and turning them into bars and restaurants.

The new buildings have been compelled to follow the diktats of the London Design Guide which require a certain architectural discipline and uniformity, which may be regarded as a bit dull, but prohibits arbitrary ostentation. The result is that the area has been able to keep much of its previous character, while becoming more densely built, including big developments bought not so much by foreign investors, but office workers.

Many people will no doubt be critical of what has happened to Hackney Wick on the grounds that it is a classic example of gentrification. But I prefer an environment of old buildings intermixed with new, including small-scale, independent shops and cafés, than the wind-swept dehumanisation and megastructures, the empty consumer paradise, which is what has happened in Stratford and, indeed, in so much of the rest of London.

ADVERTISE YOUR BUSINESS WITH *THE CRITIC* MAGAZINE

REACH OVER 19,000 NEW CUSTOMERS WITH EVERY ISSUE

WANT TO ADVERTISE IN *THE CRITIC*?

The Critic is Britain's wonderful monthly current affairs, ideas and culture magazine, dedicated to first-rate writing — and unafraid to ask the questions others won't. *The Critic* magazine now offers full-colour advertising options. As well as the opportunity to be featured on the pages of future issues, you also have the option to advertise across *The Critic*'s key social media channels.

WHY CHOOSE THE CRITIC?

1 Expand your reach — *The Critic* has an audited circulation of 19,654 every issue
2 Target new customers
3 Increase your brand exposure
4 Increase sales
5 Drive your online traffic

Published each month, with two double issues per year, *The Critic* is mailed to the homes of its subscribers and is sold in key retailers throughout the UK, as well as internationally.

ACT FAST! THE ADVERTISING DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE CLOSES SOON

To advertise your business directly or for our media packs and costs please do email us at: advertising@thecritic.co.uk
Our team will be only too happy to help you and we will get back to you by the next business day.

LISA HILTON bemoans the fate of neighbourhood restaurants struggling to get ingredients and staff
THIS PAGE

FELIPE FERNÁNDEZ-ARMESTO says summer is the perfect time for cold soup
PAGE 90

PATRICK GALBRAITH meets the new Italian owner of London's finest gunmaker, Holland & Holland
PAGE 92

CHRISTOPHER PINCHER recommends mocktails for pleasure without the pain
PAGE 92

HEPHZIBAH ANDERSON waters her thirsty allotment during the heatwave
PAGE 94

STEPHEN POLLARD picks his list of all-time favourite horses
PAGE 95

HANNAH BETTS adores a designer who makes clothes for grown-ups
PAGE 96

CLAUDIA SAVAGE-GORE empathises with pill-popping pal, Pandora
PAGE 97

EATING OUT

Anyone for Woolton pie?

Lisa Hilton endures a taste of the Blitz spirit at a chain restaurant with no butter, no jam and few staff

MANY SUPERIOR WRITERS have chronicled the long crushing of illusions which marks the progress from innocence to experience, but none (to my knowledge), have discussed the appalling revelation that some people *don't brush their teeth before breakfasting*. In public. Really.

I'd always had a bit of a thing about the unwarranted intimacy of hotel breakfast rooms; all those creased faces and ill-disguised adulterous hangovers looming at one over the buffet. But I learned only recently that my revulsion at the frowsty, halitotic miasma which inevitably hovers over the toast station of mid-range hotels is due to some antiquated dental advice that you should brush after your branflakes.

I don't want to see you eating branflakes, or indeed to think about why you're eating them, not with the evidence of the state of your intestines being blasted all over me.

Thus it was with great relief that I learned that the place where I was staying during a recent research trip used a branch of Côte as its breakfast room. I could take my coffee on the pavement in splendid isolation and pretend I was in Paris.

SLOANE SQUARE IS ALSO excellent for people-watching: harassed hedge fund dads dragging preposterously prep-school uniformed children to their classes; Chelsea matrons clucking into Peter Jones; impossibly-gleaming Pilates-goers in cashmere sweats. The waiter who brought my latte looked as though he hadn't slept for a week, but that only added to the Gallic authenticity.

Jam tomorrow?

He was probably a poet or a jazz musician, not so fresh from an all-night dive. I ordered an orange juice and some toast. The waiter explained politely that I could certainly have the toast, but that there was no butter or marmalade. Jam?

"No jam. Supply chain. Sorry."

I like Côte. Yes, it's a chain and yes, the food is predictable. But the dearth of plucky independent neighbourhood restaurants means predictable chains are what many people are stuck with, and Cote's middle-of-the-road take on French brasserie classics is consistently dependable and pleasing.

Chains are an interesting gauge of trends and moods and Côte's summer

TABLE TALK LOGO BY JONNY HANNAH; WRITERS' PORTRAITS BY VANESSA DELL; CÔTE BRASSERIE

specials were certainly making an effort: a luxey lobster and chips with lemon hollandaise; Charentais melon with Bayonne ham; a goat cheese cream and Breton tomato salad which claimed to be from the hand of "Camille", Côte's second-generation tomato grower across the Channel.

The prices are more than reasonable, with mains about £15, no side over a fiver and a decent selection of vegan and vegetarian options including squash taboulleh and a fricassee of celeriac. Absolutely nothing wrong with an onion soup and a jolly steak frites; I thought it would be telling, if not interesting, to return for dinner.

SO THAT EVENING I SAW the waiter again, still working after what was by that time a 13-hour shift. The restaurant was lively with tourists and after-work types. I waited half an hour at the same uncleared table while he signed somnambulistic apologies. The steak was off, as was the soup, so I went for a tomato and caper salad and the Breton fish stew. Butter had materialized, which was disproportionately pleasing; fresh, chewy baguette and a glass of Pinot Noir were fine to pass the time.

At least for the first hour. When the tomatoes turned up they were pallid, flavourless and starchy, but nothing like as grim as the stew — a watery soup which had been used to reconstitute a Frozen Seafood Selection, with one slice of cottony, unidentifiable white fish bobbing disconsolately in the murk. If I was Michel Houellebecq I'd say it looked like an abandoned life raft in a harrowing short about the refugee crisis. The stew's base was supposedly wine and chilli, neither of which flavours were detectable. It didn't even have the guts to be bad, it was just pointless.

WHEN THE WAITER eventually came to remove the full dishes, he had the grace not to ask if everything had been all right. I asked him instead and the poor chap practically burst into tears. He indicated his colleague, a lady I also recognized from the breakfast shift. "She hasn't had a day off in three weeks."

No staff, he explained, and the few workers available unable to make their commute in time for their shifts. He said he had slept in the stock room last night as it was the only way to get to work on time. At least there was space, as he claimed the restaurant had no stock — "we order it, but it doesn't come".

Côte isn't trying to be cutting-edge so much as reliable and reassuring; providing the kind of "nice meal" that was until recently such a positive feature of the British High Street.

Côte at breakfast

Yet no one seems to be really talking about the challenges such businesses are facing, or the cause of them, in the same way that the half-empty shelves in Boots and Pret and Marks & Spencer are apparently no longer worthy of comment.

There's more than a flavour of Blitz spirit at large when one is expected to be thrilled that a restaurant can provide butter. Someone wanted this nonetheless, even if it means that the poor waiter might soon be reduced to boiling up the elephant in the room.

EATING IN

Some like it chilled

Summer is the perfect time for cold soup, says Felipe Fernández-Armesto

"SOME LIKE IT HOT." In the homonymous movie, Tony Curtis's character was thinking of fans who favour mephitic rhythms and instruments that lose their cool. But in most people's experience heat and cold occur in afflicted bloodstreams, or weather, or — especially where tastes conflict — at table. The imagery of Curtis's metaphor obviously originated in food.

The phrase he immortalised occurred earliest, as far as I know, in reference to pease pudding. Some, according to the children's rhyme, like it cold, or "nine days old", whereas "some like it hot."

Longing for cold pease pudding — even without nine days' growth of mould — is a mischievous invention. No one really likes the dish. If you sieve split-peas strenuously, beat in thick cream, stir in green herbs and season lavishly, you can turn this boorish mush into a palatable dish. It works in winter weather, when fresh peas are unavailable, with hearty boil-ups and stews. But as soon as it cools

CÔTE BRASSERIE

it becomes stodge. English conditions may call for its indigestibly warming effects even in summer, when, as Flanders and Swann sang,

August, cold and dank and wet,
brings more rain than any yet,

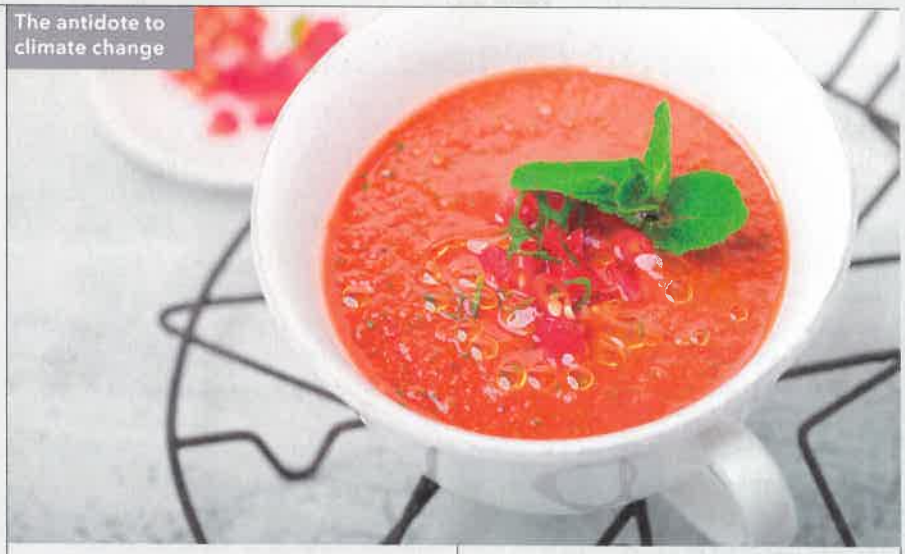
and

Bleak September's mist and mud
is enough to chill the blood.

IN THE SEASON, HOWEVER, when the wise and wealthy among the English flee to villas by the Mediterranean or Caribbean, demand grows for what some like cold. Chilled soup, which mitigates the scorching and the sweating, is the antidote to climate change.

Spanish gazpachos and *salmorejos* are ideal because the ingredients are raw: stoves can stay unlit and kitchens cool. Basic technique hardly changes between regions or recipes. Olive oil, dropped gently and mixed slowly, emulsifies ripe tomatoes, peeled, seived and blended with crumbled chunks of dense white bread that is soft from immersion in the purée. A smooth consistency results. Garlic, crushed with a pinch of salt and sugar to modify the harshness, provides the key flavour. THE CHARM OF THE DISH lies in garnishes, which can vary in combination according to taste: chopped hard-boiled eggs and raw-cured ham for carnivores; shrimps, cockles and smoked trout for pescatarians; for everybody, including vegans: croutons and sliced white asparagus or tiny cubes of cucumber, sweet onion and peppers. Some enthusiasts incautiously favour grapes, melon or peach. Heretics add ice cubes or scoops of fruit sorbet, but they alter the consistency of the soup. It should be perfectly chilled before serving.

Ajo blanco is similar, but recalls an earlier era, before tomatoes arrived from Mexico, when almonds were still exotic ingredients, invoking Moorish sybaritism. It's best, I think, if the bread is steeped in almond milk, before blending with almonds that have been crushed virtually to powder, and emulsifying with olive oil. Abrasive garlic can jar in so subtle a soup; so it's best to fillet out the intensely acrid core of the bulb before crushing with salt and sugar and adding to the mixture.


The antidote to climate change

Halved green grapes and whole blanched or toasted almonds are the best and, I claim, the only acceptable garnish, adding squelch and crunch, though seeds — pumpkin, caraway, sesame — have advocates.

CAN HOSTS START WITH anything raw, other than tomatoes or almonds, and make an equally good dish? Experiments with cucumbers always seem unsatisfactory, dependent on desperately added flavours. Some fruits — especially melons — withstand transformation into savoury purées by the addition of herbs and strong pepper, but, to a purist, fruity soups seem contrived.

In some cuisines — especially in continental climes, where extreme temperatures encourage recipes adaptable for hot and cold weather alike — cold soups commonly require prior cooking. For vichysoisse, for instance, you must boil the leeks and potatoes before blending them into a purée and adding cream.

Chilled borscht made from beets (*left*) is excellent, but was laborious until hypertension-sufferers' demand made beetroot juice available in cartons. A blob of crême fraiche in a bowl of the stuff makes a delicious simulacrum of the traditional dish.

Historically, Ukrainians took their version with bites of garlic; so garlic shavings are admissible as a garnish. So are plums, which in some countries on the borders of Russia are common additions to the recipe. Prawns with dill wisps are unorthodox but recommendable.

Almost any cold vegetable vélouté can appeal to particular tastes: sorrel, carrot, sweetcorn and watercress attract passionate partisans. None surpasses young peas in a *zuppa di piselli* — simmered till soft in a *soffrito* of onion and laced with cream.

Some like it hot, but as a dish it resembles chilling revenge: sweet if cold.

PANTHER MEDIA GMBH/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; DMITRY DZEMA/CCSHARE ALIKE 4.0 INTERNATIONAL LICENCE

COUNTRY NOTES

Passion by the barrel

Patrick Galbraith meets the new boss of London's finest gunmaker

ON THE STEPS UP TO THE blue door a man in a faded red tracksuit leans on one of the stone pillars in the Monday morning sun. All down Jermyn Street windows have been thrown open and flags above shop doors hang still in the heat.

I knock three times then push a bottle of Sudafed up my nose, squeeze twice, and lick at the bitter liquid as it runs over my lip. I was 20 before I ever experienced hay fever. I was fishing somewhere I shouldn't have been when it first hit. I've not enjoyed June much since.

When I get up there, Franco Gussalli Beretta is sitting in the middle of the room in a puddle of sunlight: blue suit, thick grey hair, and a trio of arrows on his big silver belt buckle, the logo of a business established by his ancestor in Lombardy almost 500 years ago.

The earliest documented order was from the Venetian Republic for 185 barrels: "296 ducats made payable to Bartolomeo Beretta." Fifteen generations later, Franco oversees the production of 1,500 guns a day, from grenade launchers to the ubiquitous "Silver Pigeon", probably the most popular shotgun in the world.

The current generation are aggressively acquisitive. In recent years they've bought a German optics firm, a Finnish rifle manufacturer, and an American company that makes replicas of the sort of weapons that won the West — my own cowboy costume has been too small for some time.

THEN, LAST FEBRUARY, Beretta made their boldest move yet by buying Holland & Holland, the finest gunmaker in London. Franco is a likeable man: he speaks at twice the volume he needs to and he laughs more loudly still. He loves cars and art and boats, and he admits that the day there's a Beretta running the business who isn't passionate about guns will be the day it all goes bang. What Holland & Holland needs, he reckons, is innovation.

British gunmakers have been stuck in the late nineteenth century for over a hundred years now and it might just be that Franco has the *coglioni* to make it new. We talk for half an hour and then as I'm standing to go, Carlo walks in — nonchalant at 25, a black t-shirt, dark sunglasses and jeans. Bartolomeo's 16 times great-grandson. Franco gestures towards him and asks if I have any questions for the boy. Carlo talks to me briefly about NFTs but then tells me the real struggle is going to be a political one. He wants to make the world understand that hunting can be part of conservation. "And do you hunt?" I ask, thinking we might swap rabbit recipes. He shakes his head and tells me that as crazy as it sounds he doesn't get out very much: "In Italy, young people don't hunt so much anymore."

A COUPLE OF DAYS LATER, across town, I'm at the HarperCollins summer party, drinking champagne with Guy Shrubsole, the author of *Who Owns England*, and a self-confessed "troublemaker" who aims to win public access to private land. It's a curious thing: as the editor of *Shooting Times*, I suppose I'm meant to dislike Guy. I know plenty of people who do and I'm sure we could unearth differences if we went at it, but I also want to live in a world where the

CHRISTOPHER PINCHER ON DRINK

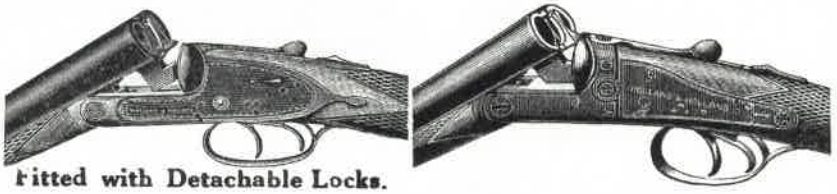
How not to get pickled

BBC

In 1991, Alan Bennett's one-act play *A Question of Attribution* was set to celluloid by the BBC. In a key scene, Soviet spy turned Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures, Sir Anthony Blunt (portrayed by James Fox), is surprised by The Queen (Prunella Scales) whilst working in the Buckingham Palace picture gallery. Their conversation turns to the famed forger of Vermeers, Han van Meegeren, and the nature of fakes from the genuine article. In artful wordplay Blunt attempts to dodge regal questions about authenticity, knowing of course of his own duplicity. Finally Her Majesty, ever practical, asks "if something is not what it seems to be, what is it?" A beleaguered Blunt replies pleadingly, "An enigma?"

Life's pleasures too, can be enigmas. And as life is said to mirror art so art can mirror alcohol. There are plenty of drinks that have all the appearance and appeal of liquor but which in fact are dry as dust. Consider the mocktail which, when artistically designed and delivered, can convey to its drinker all the pleasures of the spirit without any deleterious effect on the flesh.

Ambience matters too. A warm summer breeze. The

HOLLAND & HOLLAND
MEDIUM GRADE GUNS
LATEST MODELS
Special No. 2 Model Ejector. Special No. 3 Model Ejector

Fitted with Detachable Locks.
For Sportsmen requiring a less expensive weapon than our well-known "Royal," we have introduced a medium-quality EJECTOR GUN, which is a sound, well-made weapon and can be relied on in every way.
GUNMAKERS TO HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE V.,
98, NEW BOND STREET, LONDON, W.1
TELEPHONE: MAYFAIR 1185.
BADMINTON SHOOTING GROUNDS, WEMBLEY PARK, N.W.

countryside can be enjoyed by all.

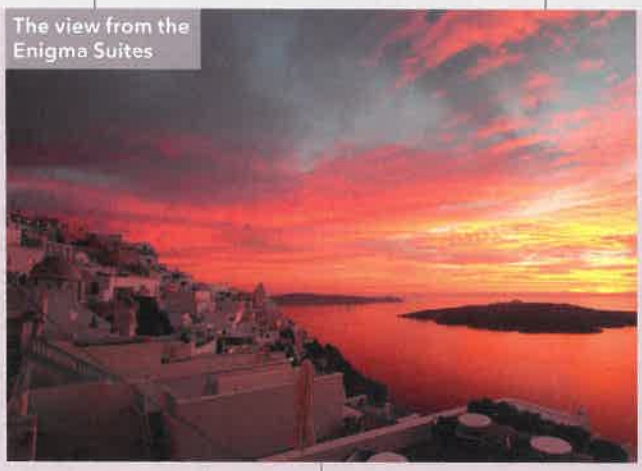
I regularly hear from goose shooters whose hunting grounds have been bought up by second homeowners and not so many years ago, I would sit by the phone, trying to pluck up enough courage to make the call: "I was thinking, mister, could I cycle over on my bike with my air rifle. It's just I saw loads of rabbits in your top field." It was usually a yes, except on a local place owned by a garden centre magnate, notable for putting an advert in the local paper requesting that nobody in the village speak to him.

Guy is right. Young people miss out on so much richness if they're separated from nature. I've long thought that to cast a fly, shoot a rabbit, or sit in a muddy ditch waiting for a goose, is to not just be in nature, but it's to become part of it. Hunting grants us a new way of seeing and I want that for all young people, scions of great dynasties and the rest of us alike.

As I walked home, I wondered if Guy and I should join forces. We could cook up some sort of campaign that fights for the right of every little child to pursue trout and rabbits. I went to bed with my trousers on thinking what a great idea it was and awoke at four in the morning with a sore head, uncertain if the thought had any legs at all.

Patrick Galbraith's first book, *In Search of One Last Song*, is out now in hardback with William Collins

golden shafts of the sun. Sand and the shimmering sea. These also can be enigmatic. In fact quite literally at the Enigma Hotel, perched atop the Santorini caldera and gazing out across the azure Aegean Sea. From this lofty paradise, a ledge looking down into the lacuna left by the volcano, you can sit and sip the fruits of the barkeep's labours.


The view from the Enigma Suites

HOTEL ATLANTIS

For example pick a Raspberry Lemonade Virgin Mojito and no matter how strong the sun, you will not get pickled. The luscious and ever so slightly bitter berries crown the creation whilst the lemonade adds zing to the zest of the mint. My only tip is to make sure the ice is properly crushed and that there is lots of it.

Or in the evening when the sun is melting faster than the ice, why not opt for a creamier concoction, say a "Hot Chocolate" Margarita? Soothing before a cold supper, this Margarita is composed of thick cream, chocolate syrup and a rum substitute and bedecked with marshmallow floating in the schooner like the gleaming yachts at anchor in the bay below.

And if Champagne is your thing but minus any post- prandial sting, a Frozen Peach Bellini mocktail is the ticket. Sparkling apple juice backfills the bubbles whilst a blend of peach and lime melds velvet fruitiness with a little light astringency. It is perfect with a continental breakfast or in the twilight on Skaros as the sun sets over the Oia Castle.

The greatest enigma of all is why mocktails are not more widely popular and available. They are flavoursome, they are wholesome and they fake the effect you want at a party or relaxing on holiday. When Bennett wrote *A Question of Attribution*, he included as his masterly centrepiece the three faces of man in Titian's *Allegory of Prudence*. These encapsulate the meaning of the mocktail. They can be drunk by anyone, including youth; they improve rather than impair the vitality of middle age; and they delay the ravages of the years, wrought into the face of the old man. Fakes? For sure. But for superlative pleasure without any pain, they are the genuine article.

Chris Pincher was the Government deputy chief whip

ROOT & BRANCH

The heat is on

Hephzibah Anderson says we need to rethink our use of water

AS HOBBIES GO, gardening is moderate in its demands. It doesn't insist on the financial outlay and questionable Lycra-clad limbs of cycling and it won't necessitate the weekends away that a friend's husband has begun claiming for his paragliding. But while it's less likely than those other pursuits to alter your relationship with your spouse, gardening will change your relationship with the weather.

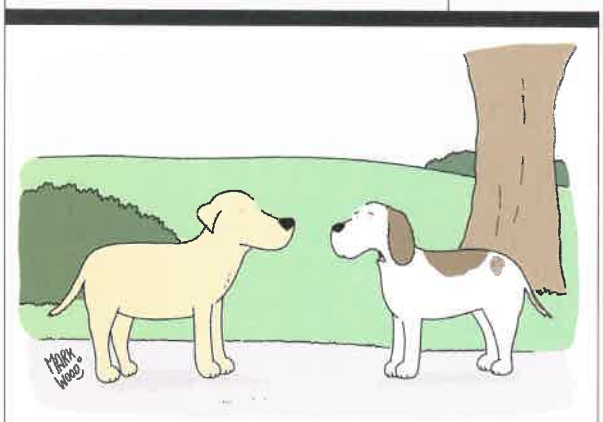
You'll feel it most during summer months. We all want warmth and sunlight, but give a gardener too many days of unbroken blue skies and anxiety settles. The rest of the country will be stripping off and roasting themselves, you'll be left contemplating every gardener's worst nightmare: the hosepipe ban.

The British weather being what it is, we could well be in the midst of biblical downpours by the time you read this, but as I write, another shimmering heatwave looms. Even without hosepipe bans, watering can be a fraught business. At the allotment, we reap one of the rare benefits of clay soil when the rain dries up: its surface may crack but plunge in a spade (granted, a pickaxe might be more effective) and down below it remains dark and damp.

SEEDLINGS AND YOUNG PLANTS don't of course have the roots to reach down that far, so I'm still going to need to water my winter greens and thirstier plants like tomatoes. While each plot has a tap close by, if more than one is used at once, the pressure drops to a hammy trickle, conjuring up visions of deserts and desperation, and making of the task long, slow work. By unspoken arrangement then, we've come to think of certain times of the day as "ours", teeing up tense mutterings if anyone arrives when they're not expected.

Container gardens can be still more problematic. If I let my daughter water our window boxes too thoroughly, passers-by get a dousing. Then there are our neighbours, gardeners themselves but anxious about dampness seeping through the pavement to their basement entrance. We seem to have reached a truce by swapping moisture-retaining plant saucers for those dainty little ceramic pot feet. Our doorstep garden is now permanently *en pointe* but any overspill evaporates swiftly.

Last summer, another neighbour rigged up an automatic irrigation system for his hanging baskets. It seemed far more work than simply getting out a stepladder and watering can, requiring constant tinkering, but I'm beginning to think he might be onto something. Because despite an abundance of watering cans aimed at the under-fives, watering, it turns out, is not only a potent source of human conflict, it is more complicated than might be assumed.



"I'm gender neutered."

Most of us know when to water. When your plants start to droop obviously isn't the answer (not least because that can also be a sign of *overwatering*). Water at high noon, and you risk scorching. Watering in the evening means losing less to evaporation (the scent can be intoxicating then, too), but watering in the morning is most widely recommended, ensuring that any foliage that also gets a soaking dries off more quickly, which is helpful when it comes to deterring both slithery pests and mildew.

THEN THERE IS the question of how much to water. A light sprinkling, for instance, encourages the growth of roots closer to the surface rather than deep down, and this in turn can leave a plant less able to cope with drought. A more thorough, less frequent drenching is far more effective.

But as gardeners we should be thinking more intelligently about water for other reasons, too. According to the Met Office, the growing season in the UK now lasts 29 days longer that it did between 1961 and 1990, and that's a decidedly mixed blessing.

As a changing climate alters the demands we put on our planet, we need to recalibrate what we think of as a flourishing green space. The ideal English garden of popular imagination is still full of rambling roses and delphiniums, plox and hollyhocks — all but the last of which like a lot of watering. The plant of the year at the Chelsea Flower Show back in May? The *x Semponium* "Destiny", a purple-hued hardy succulent that happens to be incredibly drought-tolerant.

You don't need to rip up your rosebushes just yet but if you have space, now seems a good time to create a water butt for storing rainwater. You can buy one or you can fashion your own. I'm thinking a keg might do the trick. After all, it's thirsty work, gardening.

CARTOON BY MARK WOOD

TURF ACCOUNT

Odds-on favourites

Stephen Pollard picks his list of horses to remember

LAST MONTH THE *Racing Post* ran a poll among readers for the greatest race of all time. As far as I am concerned, four of the ten nominated were invalid, being flat races. While I am prepared to concede that the likes of Grundy v Bustino (regularly and ridiculously cited as the "greatest ever") in 1975 and Dancing Brave's Arc de Triomphe win in 1986 were both epic, that's within the definitional constraint of them both being flat races, and thus ineligible for the ultimate accolade.

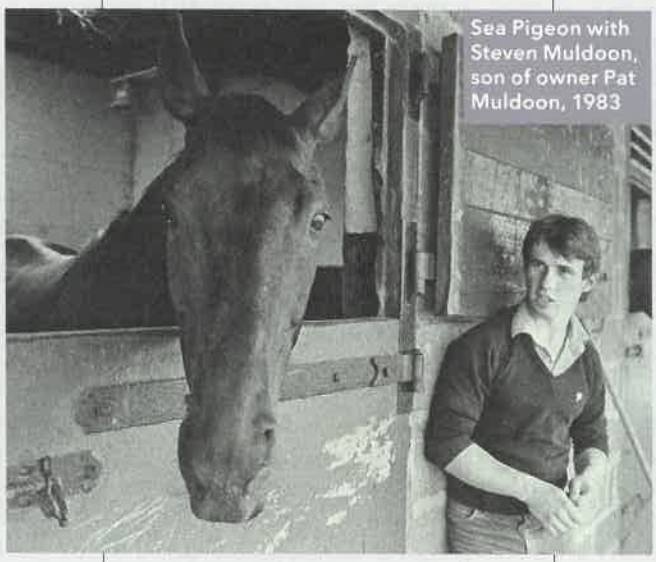
That's not an insult. Something doesn't have to be the greatest ever to be memorable, or even a favourite. Football fans, for example, have their own pantheon of favourite players: rarely are they simply a list of greats.

I HAVE A SIMILAR LIST of horses: few of them were champions, but they had something about them that lives with me forever. In no particular order, here they are.

WAYWARD LAD. If push comes to shove, my favourite ever chaser. He was one of Michael Dickinson's five horses that took the first five places in the 1983 Cheltenham Gold Cup (he finished third). But Cheltenham wasn't his stomping ground. For the real Wayward Lad, you had to see him at Kempton on Boxing Day, when he won three King Georges. To me, he represented everything wonderful about steeplechasing.

I'M A DRIVER. A chaser who put his heart into every obstacle he jumped, I'm A Driver had the raw talent to be a champion, but never quite managed to put it all together. But so what? He was adorable — and thrilling to watch. (I only learned writing this that he was sold into the Tony Dickinson stable by legendary punter Barney Curley.)

SEA PIGEON. The greatest hurdler, ever. I refuse to countenance any debate about this. So slick and fast he could even win an Ebor carrying 10 stone on the flat, when he was ridden by Jonjo O'Neill, as well as two Chester Cups. (Lester Piggott won on him on his debut as a two-year-old at Ascot.)



Sea Pigeon with Steven Muldoon, son of owner Pat Muldoon, 1983

His acceleration was something to behold, used to devastating effect when John Francome rode him to win the 1981 Champion Hurdle. If you want my vote for the greatest race — and the greatest ride — this is it. Francome sat and waited, waited, waited until ... surely ... it was too late — with Daring Run and Pollardstown battling it out. And then when it was far too late, he let Sea Pigeon go — and the race was all over, Sea Pigeon the winner.

FRENCH HOLLY. We'll never know how good he would have been because he died in a training accident in his first season as a novice chaser. But everything pointed to stardom. As a novice hurdler in 1997/98, he was unbeaten in five races, culminating in the Sun Alliance at Cheltenham.

But he was built to jump fences and won his debut chase in October 1999 — before his accident a week later. He was not a natural jumper but used his huge size and ability to learn to improve.

REMAINDER MAN. If he is remembered at all, it is as the sire of champion chaser One Man. But for 13-year-old me, Remainder Man was the first flat horse I really loved.

There has hardly ever been a less fashionable but more skilled trainer than Reg Hollinshead, who in a 60-year career had over 1,500 winners. Remainder Man was average-ly bred and had an OK-ish two-year-old season. But he so nearly won the 1978 2,000 Guineas, finishing second by just one and a half lengths.

This was universally dismissed as a fluke and he didn't appear as a fancied runner in any of the Derby previews. But with three furlongs to go, Remainder Man was second behind Hawaiian Sound (ridden by US legend Bill Shoemaker) and looked to have every chance of winning.

It was only in the final furlong that his relative lack of stamina told and he faded to finish third. Again, the wiseacres sneered and if you Google him today, you'll find next to nothing. But second in the Guineas and third in the Derby is pretty good in my book.

IN TRUTH, I COULD HAVE listed another dozen horses, such as Barton, Wind And Wuthering, Sergeant Cecil, Kybo or even one of my own, Spring Dawn. But that's another story ...

JOHN VARLEY/MIRRORPIX/GETTY IMAGES

STYLE

On HM service

Hannah Betts hails Hayley Menzies's gear for grown-ups

IF ONE TAKES one's lead from those young adults not exposing their genitalia on *Love Island* this summer, then the look of the season is meno-core, aka the Coastal Grandmother Aesthetic.

TikTokers are wild for the CG vibe, with us since *Man Repeller*'s Harling Ross coined the term back in July 2017 to describe a look "inspired by the aesthetic of a middle-aged woman on a low-key beach vacation". Ross pointed to the classy-ish but casual, chic yet marginally quirky guise of the middle-aged heroines of Nancy Meyers's movies, principally, Diane Keaton in 2003's *Something's Got to Give*. We're talking seaside ease, sans preppiness, but with homemade-granola boho.

A bleached, sludgy morass of sun hats, long sweaters, Birkies and drawstring linens, meno-core is the antithesis of the bandage dress: sexless, soothing, self-care manifested as a wardrobe. The combined effects of #MeToo and the pandemic have only exacerbated the retreat into these protective, natural-fibre layers, as Millennials opt into premature perimenopause.

MEANWHILE, THOSE TECHNICALLY menopausal have gone the other way and are infantilising themselves with a nymphs and shepherds guise by way of *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane*. I attended some grand, all-female, Gen X dinner the other day actually to discuss matters meno, and was the only woman not clad as Little Bo Peep; all candy colours, puffed sleeves, and frilly flounces. It left a sickly feeling, another rejection of sexuality, only this time as a collective tribute to Violet Elizabeth Bott.

What's the adult dresser to do? Well, this one's sporting Hayley Menzies and has no intention of ever donning anything else again come summer. I've written about my love of Menzies before en passant. However, this penchant has now gone off-the-scale and I have rid myself of anything remotely hot weatherish other than a handful of her insanely flattering, silk, maxi shirt dresses. To date, I have sported HM in Venice, Necker Island, at the races, down the boozer, from Buck House to the big house, as it were, less a fan than the poor woman's stalker.

THIS IS A SHAME, AS HAYLEY is ace: 45, tiny, blonde with a fabulously erect yoga arse. She grew up in an artsy west London clan, before studying design and styling at the London College of Fashion. Menzies raved, she downward dogged, she ran a club, a "rock 'n' rolling stone", before setting up a stall on Portobello Market in 2011. Groupies followed, urging our heroine to launch her own brand flogging spirited ready-to-wear to "life's refined rebels".

Now in its twelfth year, said brand is stocked in over 100 stores in 17 countries, with a cheery bricks and mortar presence in Chelsea's Duke of York Square (opened between lockdowns), and a thriving online trade. The company's growth during the pandemic was the stuff of fantasy given we were fed the line that fashion had perished. Instead, between 2019 and the end of 2021, HM business grew 320%.

In part, this may be attributable to the label's cunning positioning as a luxurious, eco-conscious option

Frocks that rock

occupying a far loftier position than high-end high street, yet without the artificially-inflated price tags of designer wares. "That sounds fair," the customer reflects. "An incredibly beautiful, thoughtfully-produced frock that will last me a lifetime probably should cost 460 quid. Plus I am in love."

Design takes place in London. Yarns are chosen by Hayley in Florence, then a mother-and-daughter-run Romanian factory produces the knitwear. Silks are developed, printed and produced in Blighty, then pieced together in a family-owned factory in Bulgaria. There is a pleasing focus on genuine relationships, both with HM's largely female creatives, and her customers alike.

Frankly, it's the coolest girl gang I've ever levered myself into, with a Nineties/Noughties boho feel — only better, more elegant, and entirely

HAYLEY MENZIES; CARTOON BY GRANT MEIKLE

pointed out in a speech last year that the increase in the 50s age-bracket is just where people accumulate wealth most rapidly (they have high earning power and fewer dependents). This will be deflationary.

The other obvious objection is Japanification — the persistent failure of inflation to rear its head in Japan however high their debt goes, as an economy adjusts to gerontocracy. We're a little behind Japan, but they are forecast to hit a dependency ratio of over 80 per cent by 2040, with a dementia rate of 4 per cent.

The key argument is that Japan had an option not open to us: as their demographics went through the nightmare we're about to encounter, they were able to move production to neighbouring low-cost countries. This has allowed them to sustain a 2 per cent per year improvement in per capita productivity even as their economy barely grows, and a lot of their manufacturing base is now in the near-abroad. Looking ahead, those productivity numbers are figures to envy.

THE BEST COUNTER-ARGUMENT TO MOST complicated matters are the "unknowns" — how many of the really big events of the past few decades were usefully foreseeable? There are so many possibilities that could change the story: a cure for dementia, cracking the nut of fusion power, a really nasty pandemic, political upheaval, but it'll probably be unknown unknowns invisible from where we stand. Helpfully vague.

To bring the story bang up to date, the ONS have just released their 2021 census, which revealed nearly 2 million more pensioners in England and Wales compared to a decade ago but a quarter million fewer under-4s, 350,000 fewer people between 15 and 24, and 650,000 fewer people in their 40s: these age-groups should have been the engine-room of our economy over the next decades.

It might be worth panning out again to put this in context: retirees made up 13 per cent of the UK population in 1970, 16 per cent by 2010 and as of the 2021 census that figure is now 19 per cent. (For reference, a third of Japan is now over 65, and they sell more nappies for the elderly than for babies.)

As this trend continues, the number of high-dependency over 85s in this country is expected to double in the next 20 years and the proportion of the UK population living with dementia is forecast to increase from 1.5 per cent to 2.5 per cent of the population, putting huge pressure on social care and healthcare.

WE AREN'T ENORMOUSLY out of step with the rest of the world; the global population with dementia is forecast to treble in the next 30 years, and it's going to be the biggest problem that nobody is talking about. Theresa May thought that being honest about the need to grasp the funding-of-social-care nettle would be a good thing to mention to an electorate. But regardless of the current arguments on immigration policy, it is looking like the scarce resource of the future is going to be labour — workers to look after us in our dotage.

Inevitably, having such a top-heavy demographic profile is starting to get seriously expensive; our NHS consumes around 44 per cent of day-to-day public spending from departmental budgets, up from around 27 per cent a generation ago.

The recent increase in National Insurance will disappear into its gaping maw without trace; there is already talk of healthcare workers striking. Social care is now, infamously, so lamentably underfunded that hospitals grind to a halt because there is nowhere to discharge recovered elderly patients.

The amount of money required is close to unfathomable. It will have to come primarily from tax increases because assuming that the Bank of England will allow real rates to remain negative to steadily deflate the impact of continued borrowing on public debt, the appeal of government bonds for international investors withers.

Workers and pensioners both have leverage, increases in tax rates are themselves inflationary. We are in a debt trap after the profligacy of our response to the financial crisis and Covid. Even before the pandemic, the OBR forecast that public sector net debt would increase from about 80 per cent of GDP to nearly 300 per cent of GDP over the next 35 years. No politician has plausibly explained how this will be funded.

Perhaps we need to send tugs into the Channel to tow unsuspecting boats of workers towards our grateful shores; perhaps we could repurpose Nigel Farage's "Breaking Point" poster as a job advertisement in the red-hot carer market for an increasingly geriatric population. If the alternative is 50-year mortgages and taxes on the childless, then we are already in crazy policy territory.

Al Haimes has worked with data professionally for 25 years

CARTOON BY ED NAYLOR

GLOBALLY, OUTSIDE OF ECONOMICS, this has been overwhelmingly great news. As monitored by the World Bank, the proportion of Chinese living in extreme poverty has reduced from 90 per cent in 1981 to 0.2 per cent now (Deng's move to "socialism with Chinese characteristics" has arguably been one of the best political moves in history); in India the comparable figures are 60 per cent down to 10 per cent, and even Ethiopia (the poster-child for poverty when I was a child) has reduced from 75 per cent in 1992 to around 20 per cent now and this latter would be lower if it weren't for their almost continual wars.

So all those cheap garments and disposable plasticky whatsits you're meant to feel so guilty about buying have lifted unimaginable numbers of people out of unimaginable lives. And the fight against communism also seems quietly to have been won: in the decade preceding the pandemic, the private sector has accounted for 60 per cent of Chinese GDP, 70 per cent of tax revenue and 90 per cent of employment.

Politically though, this sharply lower inequality between countries (the ratio of US-to-China worker wages reduced from 35x in 2000 to 5x by 2018) has come at the expense of far greater inequality within countries: workers have lost bargaining leverage by viable threats of international outsourcing, so membership of trade unions has halved since 1980 in the UK, the US, France and Germany even as members' wages have been suppressed.

This wage suppression has itself supported the profitability and growth of western companies, as pointed out by Anna Stansbury and Larry Summers (the "Declining Worker Power" hypothesis). The working-age working class has borne the brunt: lower-middle-class wages have stagnated (at best) in real terms while the spoils have accrued to the managerial and capital-owning classes, as Thomas Piketty doesn't tire of pointing out, and this has slowly but surely built a political powder-keg.

RESENTMENT AT LOSS OF negotiating leverage has led workers to back populist candidates and movements (often of the right rather than the left, socialists being by instinct internationalists), which is now leading to a withering-on-the-vine of globalisation, the return of inflation and sabre-rattling on trade and other barriers. The future really won't be like the past: "as labour becomes scarce again, it will recover its mojo".

In an extraordinary coordination of sweet-spots, this move to globalisation, compounded by a step-change in technology (and its mass adoption) and by very positive demographic shifts in Asia, has been amplified by positive demographic moves in the West.

Post-War baby-boomers have passed through western workforces like a pig passing through a python: as the boomers entered the workforce but had fewer children themselves, and as the increase in elderly life expectancy was only gradually working its way into the demographic tables, there was a very helpful hump in the age profile of much of the West which basically meant that proportionately a lot of our people were working, rather than requiring support. I'm really trying not to bore you with too many statistics, but you get the picture.

SO MUCH FOR THE GOOD TIMES, which will look better and better as they recede in the rear-view mirror.

As the consequence of its one-child policy, China is now facing complete stagnation in its labour force — the working-age population ground to a halt in about 2010 and started a steady decline around 2015. The internal migration from farms to cities has also run its course.

Childbirth statistics in most of the developed world have been below replacement rate for decades, and the dependency ratio (children + pensioners as a proportion of working age population) in advanced economies has increased from about 50 per cent in the 1980s to nearly 60 per cent now, and is still climbing steeply.

This puts pressure on taxes, services and social cohesion. China's dependency ratio, by the way, was 35 per cent in 2010 and is forecast to near 70 per cent by 2050; the People's Bank of China might be publicly committed to deleveraging, and is letting its tech and real estate sectors go to the wall to prove it, but the Chinese economy will have its snowglobe shaken as the elderly dissave to fund their own retirements in a state with almost no old-age safety net. It will be difficult for Chinese workers to feel too responsible for caring for the elderly "like in the old days" when every overworked labourer now has four grandparents.

What will this mean for what's coming? Inflation will not prove a temporary blip. The low inflation of the last couple of decades will not soon resume. Wage demands will match or exceed inflation. We shall shortly see how committed central banks really are to fighting inflation when their economies' potholes open into sinkholes.

THERE ARE COUNTER-ARGUMENTS. The obvious one, albeit vague, is "tech". We'll need it, every bit of it and more, and to an extent a steady advance is already priced into forecasts; but the key shortage will be health and care workers where tech has been making fewer inroads.

Another counter-argument: Gertjan Vlieghe (a member of the Bank of England's rate-setting Monetary Policy Committee)

of intelligibility. For the most part, the conversation is menacing, the threat of violence ever-present and the storylines limited in scope.

A mysterious woman causes ructions in a tight-knit East End family; two assassins await instructions in a basement; a birthday party in a seaside boarding house is interrupted by the arrival of two strangers. It would be unfair to level the accusation at Pinter's work that — to quote Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot* — "Nothing happens. Nobody comes, nobody goes. It's awful." But his plays are not, it must be said, heavy on exciting twists and edge-of-seat moments of jeopardy.

Whether one cares for Pinter's early work or not is largely down to personal taste. The "comedies of menace" in which he specialised for the first decade of his career are revived less often than one might expect, but generally attract starry casts and big-name directors when they do. Watched individually, they often feel more akin to acting exercises than to cohesive drama, with big set-piece monologues that give an actor a chance to demonstrate their versatility, but little emotional or intellectual reward.

PINTER DEVELOPED SIGNIFICANTLY as a playwright in the Seventies and Eighties and produced his finest work in such "memory plays" as *Old Times*, *No Man's Land* and his masterpiece *Betrayal*, which can stand alongside any other work of twentieth-century drama.

Perhaps it was the shift from the working-class milieu of his earlier plays to the middle-class world of the literati that Pinter (happily married to the aristocratic Lady Antonia Fraser) now inhabited, but the drama felt suddenly as if it had come alive, featuring real characters and emotional stakes, rather than remaining ossified within a fantastical, Morrisseyesque world of rough, tough men and glacial women.

But then, alas, came the poetry. Pinter stated in 1970 that "Sometimes, in poems, I am only dimly conscious of the grounds of my activity, and the work proceeds to its own law and discipline, with me as a go-between, as it were. But as you say, if not conscious, so much the better."

After he ceased writing drama in 2000, he not only continued to sublimate his urges into poetry, but, in a public forum in Turin in 2006, announced that he would continue to write verse, but not drama. The audience yelled "No!" in unison, which was taken to mean horror at the thought of this East End Prospero laying down his quill; in fact, it now seems likely that they were aghast at the idea of yet more poetry.

HIS DEATH TWO YEARS LATER put a stop to such deathless works as "American Football", perhaps his best-known poem. It bears reprinting, to understand how deep the decline was:

> Hallelullah!
> It works.
> We blew the shit out of them.
>
> We blew the shit right back up their own ass
> And out their fucking ears.
>
> It works.
> We blew the shit out of them.
> They suffocated in their own shit!
>
> Hallelullah.
> Praise the Lord for all good things.
>
> We blew them into fucking shit.
> They are eating it.
>
> Praise the Lord for all good things.
>
> We blew their balls into shards of dust,
> Into shards of fucking dust.
>
> We did it.
>
> Now I want you to come over here and kiss me on the mouth.

A case can be made for "American Football" being of a piece with Pinter's career-long interest in state violence and oppression; it's not so very far away from short, angry plays of his such as *Mountain Language* and *One For The Road*.

Yet the incontestable fact is also that it isn't very good. Pinter might have been trying to invent a new genre — agitprop poetry — but he also suffered from not being naturally adept at it. In his private papers at the British Library is a long and apparently warm correspondence between him and Philip Larkin. One can only imagine Larkin's reactions to such poetry.

Should we write Pinter off? Of course not. He was undeniably a major figure, if an overrated one, whose work does have a distinctive and, at its best, mesmeric quality.

But its opacity and lack of humanity quickly becomes wearying. He once described his plays as being about "the weasel under the cocktail cabinet", and immediately regretted this moment of clarity. It is hard not to think that he may have been better off, late in life, shrugging and saying "How should I know?" Such candour would have made it altogether easier to warm to this brusque and difficult man. ●

Pinter might have been trying to invent a new genre, but he wasn't very adept at it

THIS SPORTING LIFE

SOUTH AFRICA FIELDER JONTY RHODES MAKES A FLYING CATCH AGAINST ENGLAND

PA IMAGES/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; PHILIP BROWN/GETTY IMAGES

NICK TIMOTHY

THE NEW CRICKET MINDSET

CRICKET HAS ALWAYS understood, in the words of Tancredi in *The Leopard*, that "if we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change". For cricket, a sport renowned for its conservatism, has been conspicuously quick to embrace change. First-class cricket spawned **ONE-DAY CRICKET**, which spawned **TWENTY20**, which spawned the (admittedly despicable, artificial) **HUNDRED**. Even for the traditionalists, there is now a World Test Championship.

Cricket whites gave way to playing in pyjamas. Power shifted from England and Australia to India. Players can wear microphones for the television companies and even cameras in their helmets. The broadcasting rights for the Indian Premier League are sold for more, per match, than the rights for the English Premier League in football.

And the change is not limited to the format of the matches, nor to the way the game runs and sells itself. For the way cricket is played — with teams constantly striving for competitive advantage — is always changing.

Where once **JONTY RHODES** was a rarity, seen as a freak of nature, now every team has several Jonties: brilliant fielders capable of outstretched, diving catches and direct-hit run-outs from distance. Fielders on boundaries operate in pairs, one diving beyond the boundary rope to flick the ball to their teammate to take a catch.

BATTING HAS SEEN THE SAME KIND of drastic changes. Once teams struggled to sustain a run rate of five per over even in one-day games. Now the record score in a 50-over one-day international is 498 for 4. Teams do not rely on one pinch hitter at the top of the order — their entire line-ups are full of powerful batsmen. Where the sweep shot was once seen as radical, now reverse sweeps, slogs and scoops are almost ordinary.

As bat dominates ball — at least for now — it is easy to forget that bowling has also changed: wide yorkers and slower ball bouncers for quick bowlers; doosras and carrom balls for spinners. Players and teams from across the world have innovated and perfected these changes. Tillakaratne Dilshan pioneered the scoop, for example. Jos Buttler has taken T20 and one-day batting to another level. The Indian Premier League changed the game forever.

But one team in particular has been at the forefront of the change, and that is **ENGLAND**. After winning the Twenty20 World Cup in 2010, and continuing to prosper in test match cricket, by 2015 the team was in a mess in one-day cricket. During the World Cup that year, the English were brushed aside by other teams playing a brash, aggressive brand of cricket.

Then **EOIN MORGAN** took over the one-day captaincy and turned things around almost immediately. Under his leadership, England only narrowly lost the T20 World Cup final in 2016. By 2018, England were breaking records for the highest

BEN STOKES AND BRENDON McCULLUM TALK DURING A TRAINING SESSION BEFORE THE FIRST TEST AGAINST NEW ZEALAND IN MAY

and fastest scores in the history of the game, trouncing Australia 5-0. And in 2019 came the ultimate triumph: four years after a humiliating World Cup defeat, World Cup triumph, as England prevailed in the most dramatic final against New Zealand at Lord's.

This summer, Morgan handed over the white-ball captaincy to Buttler. He was suffering a poor run of form, and, always honest about what the team needed, he realised it no longer needed him. The best tribute to him was that the team he built had surpassed him in its aggressive and attacking mentality and execution.

AND NOW THE TEST MATCH TEAM is doing something similar. A new coach, **BRENDON "BAZ" MCCULLUM**, and a new captain, **BEN STOKES**, have brought a new mindset to Test cricket. A team that had grown timorous, whose players' technical deficiencies had been ruthlessly exposed by rival teams, appears transformed. In the fourth innings of the first four Tests of the summer, England successfully chased 277, 299, 296 and 378, often reaching five runs per over.

The extent to which "Bazball", as it has become known, is very different to what has gone before is debatable. Joe Root, freed from the burden of the captaincy, for example, is batting with freedom and scoring quickly but within convention. Jonny Bairstow has played with controlled aggression, and scored heavily. The one batsman who has, perhaps, taken things too far on occasion is Stokes himself — and he has tended then to fall cheaply. Overall, though, the team has undoubtedly been given a new and clear mindset of positivity and aggression.

While the team lacks some of the classical technical skills required by Test cricket at its toughest — batsmen facing the most skilful bowlers, bowlers trying to take wickets on flat pitches — England are at least playing to the strengths of players like Bairstow, who remains one of the most destructive one-day batsmen in the world.

Sometimes it will work, and sometimes it will fail. In an ideal world England would have better top order batsmen with watertight techniques that would hold up well on fast pitches in Australia or dry, turning wickets in India. And one of the less-understood stories of the summer is how the Dukes balls used in both county cricket and test matches have gone prematurely soft, making life harder for bowlers. We will see what happens when that problem is rectified, and when England play overseas.

But until then, we should enjoy watching England play Bazball. The revolution might not succeed ... but we will have plenty of fun watching them give it their best. ●

Nick Timothy is the author of *Remaking One Nation: The Future of Conservatism* and a *Daily Telegraph* columnist

BORIS STARLING

HAIL, LADY MARY!

THIS IS A BANNER YEAR FOR GOLDEN sporting anniversaries. First 1972 gave us Bob Massie, as detailed in last month's column. Then it gave us **MARY PETERS**.

The Munich Olympics were Mary's last shot at glory. She had competed in the pentathlon at the two previous Games, finishing fourth in Tokyo in 1964 and ninth in Mexico City four years later.

She lived in Belfast, where training conditions were tough — rainy, cold, a running track pitted with potholes, and of course repeated bombs and security alerts. But it was also for Belfast that she wanted to win as much as she did for herself. This was her city which she loved fiercely. Its people loved her right back, for her effervescence, her smile and her warmth.

PETERS IN THE HIGH JUMP (ABOVE) AND THE SHOT PUT

The Olympic competition took place over two days. Spurred on by her number (111, which she took as an omen), the atmosphere and the vast crowd — "it was the first time in my life and career I had a real audience, and I performed for them" — Mary attacked the first day like a woman possessed. Personal best in the 80m hurdles. Personal best in the shot. Personal best in the high jump.

HER OVERNIGHT LEAD was 300 points, yet she couldn't sleep. "Every time I looked at my watch it seemed the hands had moved backwards." For she knew that day two was the turf of her main rival, West Germany's Heide Rosendahl, and that those 300 points could vanish in the blink of an eye.

Heide had already won individual long jump gold, and she picked up where she left off — a leap of 6.83m, just a centimetre off her own world record. Mary recorded 5.95m. Those 300 points were down to just 47. If Heide ran to her maximum in the 200 meters, Mary would need another lifetime best to cling onto gold. "People kept telling me not to worry, as I'd won a medal. But I kept saying 'any medal is no good. It's got to be the gold."

To their marks. The hush, the set, the gun, the roar. The

BETTMANN/GETTY IMAGES; PA IMAGES/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

stagger holding as the bend unwinds. Heide on the outside, red and white striped socks a blur as she flows down the track. Mary's strides are shorter, choppier as she starts to lose ground. In the BBC commentary box Ron Pickering unashamedly abandons any attempt at impartiality and instead channels the yearning of millions of viewers back home.

"Now come on, Mary, you need the run of your lifetime. Keep on going. Rosendahl on the outside. Pollak is going well but she's only a yard clear. Mary, come on! COME ON! You've got two yards to make. Rosendahl hits the tape first, Bodner second, Pollak third, Peters fourth. But is it enough?"

For ten minutes they wait: officials poring over points tables, checking and double-checking their results, while the athletes stand in little huddles and the photographers swarm around. Suddenly Heide comes over and embraces Mary as the result flashes up on the board. PETERS, GBR, 4801: ROSENDAHL, GER, 4791. Ten points. Ten points is a tenth of a second, a tiny fraction of time in which gold medals are won and lost.

A death threat is phoned into the BBC. "Mary Peters is a Protestant and has won a medal for Britain. An attempt will be made on her life and it will be blamed on the IRA. Her home will be going up in the near future."

"Bollocks to that," she says. "I'm going back to Belfast." And when she does the city turns out to welcome her: a golden balm for a troubled and divided nation, just as she wanted. "I won it for you," she tells the crowd, "and I've brought it back for you."

SHE WAS OFFERED JOBS IN THE United States and Australia, but refused both. "I wouldn't be happy. My family is the Northern Ireland people." She set up **A TRUST IN HER NAME** to support talented young sportsmen and women from across Northern Ireland. To date it's helped more than 4,000 people, some of whom have gone onto stardom: golfers Darren Clarke, Graeme McDowell and Rory McIlroy, rugby player David Humphreys and boxer Carl Frampton.

She became British athletics team manager, the perfect mix of mother hen and sergeant-major, knowing instinctively who needed an arm round their shoulder and who a kick up the arse. More than one athlete in her charge owed their medal to a Mary P pep talk just before the off.

LADY MARY PETERS HOLDING THE QUEEN'S BATON BESIDE THE NI NETBALL TEAM DURING THE BIRMINGHAM 2022 QUEEN'S BATON RELAY

CHARLES MCQUILLAN/GETTY IMAGES FOR THE BIRMINGHAM 2022 QUEEN'S BATON RELAY

She championed the cause of women in sport, and in her footsteps as the best multi-event athlete in the world have come Denise Lewis, Jessica Ennis-Hill and Katarina Johnson-Thompson. She went into schools and spoke to children. She served as Lord Lieutenant of Belfast for five years, and at the track where she once trained she is immortalised in a bronze statue.

She's now in her eighties but has the energy and enthusiasm of someone half her age: and she still, as she always did, knows the value of things rather than their price. "I'll never be rich, I'll never be able to afford exotic holidays, but the greatest pleasure I've had from my success is in being able to help other people."

Lady Mary Peters. Olympic champion. National treasure. And gold, in every way. ●

Boris Starling is an award-winning author, screenwriter and journalist. *Leap of Faith* by Frankie Dettori with Boris Starling was published by HarperCollins last year

PATRICK KIDD

SPORTING PRIME MINISTERS

"I'VE GOT YOU A CHAT WITH BORIS," the press officer whispered conspiratorially to me, covering the 2009 Boat Race for *The Times*, and my colleague from the *Telegraph*. "But just the two of you," he added. "Don't tell the others." This seemed odd. Boris Rankov, that year's race umpire, was an approachable fellow. Why the secrecy? We wondered what news Rankov was about to reveal. The discovery of an unexploded mine off Chiswick Eyot, perhaps, or a decision to throw out any rowers doing a degree in land economy?

It was a bit disappointing, therefore, to be shown into a room and find not a professor of Roman history and six-times winning oarsman but another Boris, blond not bald, who shared the umpire's love of classics but had no apparent interest in boats. The mayor of London gave some rah-rah-rah about the capital and said how great it was that the Olympics would use the alma mater's lake. It didn't make either paper. It was, though, the first time I met our future leader.

A **PRIME MINISTER** HAS ROWED in the Boat Race, but not a British one. **HENRY WADDINGTON**, born near Le Mans and educated at Rugby, was in the Cambridge crew in 1849. Thirty years later he was prime minister of France for 11 months.

But **BORIS JOHNSON** was not a boatie. If he had attended the race as a student it would have been to nick a policeman's

Alec Douglas-Home played first-class cricket for Middlesex. Wisden reported he was useful on a sticky wicket, which is useful in politics

BORIS JOHNSON CAPTAINING A WALL GAME TEAM, ETON 1982

helmet, in time-honoured Wooster fashion. To adapt the Eton Boating Song, the only "swing-swing together" that probably interested Johnson was with his body between someone's sister's knees.

At Eton he was a dry bob, excelling at the Wall Game in his own chaotic and physical way. "Completely non-directional, he has to be pointed in the right way or he may push the wall over," a school report said in 1980. A year later, it was noted that he played "like an echidna [a type of spiny anteater] on heat". In 1982, when he captained the Collegers, he was called "the blond behemoth".

He had this in common with **HAROLD MACMILLAN**, his fellow OE PM, who was more fearless than his bookish image suggests. This is the man who spent ten hours in a shellhole in 1916 with a bullet in his pelvis, dosing himself with morphine and Aeschylus. Seven years earlier, Macmillan had played his part in an historic Wall Game: the last time a goal was scored in the big St Andrew's Day match.

OTHER PRIME MINISTERS HAVE HAD sporting talent. **ALEC DOUGLAS-HOME** played first-class cricket for Oxford and Middlesex. Wisden reported that he was good against spin and useful on a sticky wicket, which may have helped in politics.

JOHN MAJOR was no less keen, if less capable. At a summit in 1991, he opened the batting in a charity match with **BOB HAWKE**, the Australian prime minister. Hawke kept stealing the strike but Major didn't mind until the umpires waved them off after a few overs. "Time for real cricketers," the umpire said. As they walked in, Major asked Hawke if he'd known they would get limited time. "Jeez, yes," Hawke said. "Didn't you?"

MAJOR AND HAWKE OPEN THE BATTING

DAVID CAMERON was a decent college tennis player, described by John Bercow, his doubles partner for the Commons team, as "like John McEnroe when he made a mistake but tolerant and encouraging when I did".

WINSTON CHURCHILL was public schools champion at fencing. **CLEMENT ATTLEE** played billiards for Oxford. And **TED HEATH** won the Sydney to Hobart yacht race on Morning Cloud in 1970 before leading Britain to victory in the Admiral's Cup a year later while prime minister.

The Johnson approach to sport — and politics — differed from his predecessors. He had the same enthusiasm and desire to win: he just didn't care whether he did it within the rules. Johnson once said his tactics in the Wall Game were "sudden spasms of uncontrolled aggression".

MAURIZIO GAUDINO WOULD AGREE. The former Germany midfield player was taking part in a charity football match in 2006 when a red-shirted Johnson, playing, as the *Telegraph* put it, "like a demented combine harvester", ploughed into him with a no-hands rugby tackle.

At least Gaudino was a grown man. In 2015, Johnson barged shoulder-first into Toki Sekiguchi during a rugby exhibition in Tokyo, sending the 10-year-old child flying. "I accidentally flattened him, unfortunately," Johnson said. "But he bounced back." The boy said he was "in pain but OK".

This gung-ho competitiveness extends to the tennis court, where Johnson plays with a warped wooden racket that sends the ball off at unpredictable angles and puts opponents off with his deep gorilla grunting, and to the annual cricket match between his family and Earl Spencer's, for which he has been known to select such distant cousins as Kevin Pietersen Johnson and Monty Panesar Johnson.

Johnson would doubtless agree with Vince Lombardi's dictum. "Show me a good loser," the American football coach said, "and I will show you a loser."

It reminds me of a story told by my former *Times* colleague, Philip Howard, about his father, Peter, who captained England at rugby in the 1930s. Losing to Ireland at half time, he gathered his team. "Now look here chaps, are we going to play like proper Englishmen in the second half?" he asked. "Or shall we try to win?" There then followed the filthiest 40 minutes of foul play.

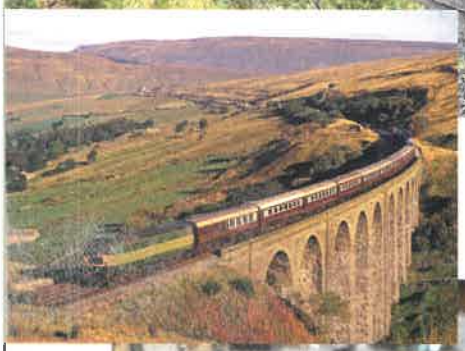
Though England still lost, by one point, I suspect Johnson would have approved of the spirit. ●

Patrick Kidd writes the Diary and Tailender in *The Times*

GILLMAN & SOAME UK LTD; ALLSTAR PICTURE LIBRARY LTD / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

EXPLORE

BRITAIN BY LUXURY TRAIN



Fancy getting away or want to treat someone special? From traversing the stunning Scottish Highlands, to cruising along the Cornish coast, exploring the nations capital or simply taking in the spectacular views whilst being served the finest gourmet food and drink. We've got lots of special trips and excursions for you to enjoy...

BROWSE OUR FINEST JOURNEYS

STATESMAN
Britain's most celebrated train

0345 310 2458
www.statesmanrail.com

CLASSIC SAPHOS TRAINS STEAM
CLASSIC STEAM EXPERIENCE

0800 038 5320
www.saphostrains.com

MIDLAND PULLMAN
First Class *de luxe* travel

0800 038 5360
www.midlandpullman.com

INTERCITY
High Speed Train

0800 038 5364
www.inter-city.co.uk